

THE SISTER'S SACRIFICE.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

CHAPTER I.

Ralph Hunter stood six feet two inches in his stockings. He was strong of limb, and broad of shoulder. Stubborn brown hair thatched his somewhat small head, and he had a mouth down at the corners, like a tiger's.

His ordinary manner was one of careless good-nature. Nobody told more amusing stories, or was more ready with a smile and a pleasant word. But those who knew the man well trembled before him. He had those worst eyes, — a cold, light blue, never bright except in anger, then glowing with a blue blaze like sulphur flames.

Strong-willed, violent and unscrupulous when opposed, utterly without principle, having risen from obscurity to wealth by more than doubtful means, he yet managed to be, in some degree, not only popular, but respectable. Those who had never suffered by him, called him, in Yankee parlance, "a clever fellow;" and gentlemen whose homes and all groaned under his mortgages were careful to raise their hats on meeting him, and dared not shrink from promenading arm in arm with him.

How could the minister refuse a gracious bow and a cordial hand-clasp to the man who kept one of the very best pews in his church at the price of an opera-box, and who put hundreds annually into the contribution-box? albeit Ralph Hunter never occupied the seat, and gave an oath for every dollar.

There were a few who held themselves aloof from this man to whom it was impossible to apply the epithet "gentle;" but they were of Nature's aristocracy, always a limited circle. Among these was Minnie Lindsay; and it chanced, by favor of the Spirit of Evil no doubt, that she was the one whose coolness was most distasteful to the rough giant.

He saw the young school-mistress pass daily through the streets, and she found favor in his sight. Her light, swift step, the flaxen curls that swung out from under her hat, the dimples ever ready to deepen

in her cheeks, the smiling eyes of bluish gray, the exquisite neatness of her attire, all pleased him. Minnie Lindsay was a lady, and, for all her sweet ways, had a pride and character of her own.

Perhaps, knowing himself to be no gentleman, and feeling his own deficiencies of education and refinement, he desired to marry one who would gild his vulgar gold with a finer polish, and win for him the respect which he well knew that he only appeared to command. For Ralph Hunter was no fool, and he knew that were he to become suddenly poor, not one of those who now treated him with such courtesy would notice him.

Minnie Lindsay was an orphan, with one brother and no sister. The only other near relative she had was a cousin, George Willis, who had lately gone West with his family.

Minnie was very proud and fond of her handsome brother James, but she was also often troubled about him. He was rather a wild fellow, and yielded to extravagances very unsuitable to the position of a young clerk with a small salary. But then, she said to herself, he was but twenty, and was made so much of. When he got along farther in years, and grew more thoughtful, he would do better. Meantime she did not complain that he came to her for money. It pleased her to deny herself for him.

The first step in Ralph Hunter's courtship was to offer James Lindsay the place of clerk in one of his stores. The salary was no larger than he had been receiving, but it afforded him a chance for promotion. Lindsay accepted the offer with as much pleasure as surprise, though his sister advised him to wait. She felt an instinctive distrust of the man and the movement. But James would accept, and since he seemed really better off, she felt obliged to be grateful to his employer.

"It is very kind of you to assist my brother, Mr. Hunter," she said with dignity. "And I hope you will be satisfied with him."

"Oh, I'll risk him," he replied carelessly, but giving her what she could not help

thinking a very pleasant smile, For Ralph Hunter smiled with all his face.

Of course some little civilities grew up between them, and as James was delighted with his employer, Minnie could not despise him. She could have wished her brother to have less responsibility, for he had charge of all the money. But he seemed to be careful, and to her repeated and anxious charges answered, somewhat impatiently, that he was no longer a boy, and was quite capable of taking care of the business confided to him.

When six months had passed away without any trouble, she began to feel better. During this time she had often met Mr. Hunter. It could hardly be avoided. James came to see her so seldom that she got in the habit of stepping into the store morning and evening as she went that way, and the owner was almost always in at such times. He seldom said much to her, but she perceived that he was willing she should call on her brother, and that was all she wanted of him.

Ralph Hunter was building him a house, and everybody was interested. There was no such house in the State as this would be. As its lofty walls reared themselves under scores of busy hands, the most exclusive began to melt, the most pious to relent. The man who could build so superb a mansion must possess singular virtues. Young ladies smiled on him, and I am afraid that the most tender and anxious of mammas did not feel displeased that they should do so. Perhaps the man would make a good husband, after all.

When the whole large plan of the building became visible, and planks of real oak came for panels, and fine granite was wrought into door-ways and window finishings, people forgot to call the owner a "giant," but pronounced him "a fine-looking man." He was invited to public dinners, offered nomination for State senator, and was known as "our distinguished fellow-townsmen, Ralph Hunter, Esq.," the last title without leave of the executive.

When the observatory fairly mounted and crowned his mansion of "Hillside," as he named it, Mr. Hunter might have asked any gentleman in town to black his boots without having reason to expect anything worse than tender reproach in answer.

Nobody but the workmen was allowed inside the house while it was being finished,

but it was said that the finishing and furniture were of the richest style. Gossips peeped from behind their blinds as load after load was driven through the gate, and there were tales of glimpses of crimson and gold, and snowy marbles beautiful to look at.

Even Minnie Lindsay, with her heart quite full of other things, began to feel some curiosity about the miniature palace that sat on the hill and overlooked the town.

CHAPTER II.

HILLSIDE.

One bright afternoon of a June day Minnie stepped in as usual to see her brother, on her way home from school. Ralph Hunter stood in the doorway, and as she entered, giving and receiving a slight bow, he called back to James, —

"Don't you and Minnie want to come up and go over my house? I've got the work-people out at last."

"I shall be delighted, sir," James said; and Minnie was not insensible of the favor shown in their being admitted as the first visitors.

"And so shall I," Minnie said, giving Mr. Hunter the first genuine smile he had ever got from her. He felt glad that he had built the house.

"Well, I'll ride up, and you can come along when you please." And his buggy whizzed out of sight.

"Jamie, Mr. Hunter certainly improves," Minnie said, as they walked up the hill. "He is not nearly as rude as he used to be. With time, he may have quite a good manner."

"Glad you think so," said her brother with a sly smile. Then sobering immediately, he launched into a flood of praises, all tending to prove that if his patron had been somewhat given to tricks at the beginning of his career, he had done no worse than many a man now highly respected; and, moreover, that he had quite given up such ways, and was in every respect a model person.

In the midst of this glorification they reached an iron gate that hung its beautiful cobweb between them and thickets of snowy-bloomed syringas that perfumed all the air. A servant opened the gate and closed it after them, and they walked up a noble avenue bordered with flowers, that

led to the house. This had been built on the site of an old house whose gardens had been the pride of the town, consequently there was no disagreeable appearance of newness. The wide wings spread themselves quite at home among the luxuriant June greenery, and the windows seemed to have looked down the walks and over the town for many a mellowing year.

"He has taste," whispered Minnie emphatically. "Nothing could be more charming. See that vine."

"Oh, Mr. Gardiner planned the changes and improvements in the grounds for him," said her brother. "But don't stop. There's Mr. Hunter waiting in the door for us."

Minnie gave another glance around the gardens, this time loving as well as admiring. Every thing had suddenly acquired a new value. The blush had not quite faded when they reached the door where Mr. Hunter received them.

The man behaved well enough. He led them over the whole house, showed the state rooms, richly though somewhat gaudily furnished, opened drawers and closets for Minnie's housewifely inspection, and finally led them back to a charming little sitting-room that looked over the town; and here they found an elaborate collation set out.

Minnie had begun to be a little confused by these civilities; and when James excused himself to go in search of a glove, that was in his pocket at the moment, she rose to go.

"Wait a moment for James," said her host: "he'll be right down."

"I need not, for our ways are different," she said. "Besides, Mrs. Lane will wait tea for me; though, thanks to your hospitality, I have already had my supper. But she will wait. I thank you very much, sir. Good-evening."

"I wish, Miss Lindsay," Ralph Hunter said, following her into the hall, "I wish that if you see anything wrong or lacking here, you would say so. You have taste, and I don't profess to have any, and I want everything to suit you."

"You overrate my judgment and knowledge very much," Minnie said, opening her eyes in astonishment. "It is the most beautiful place I have ever seen. There is nothing lacking."

"Yes, there is!" he exclaimed, getting very red in the face. "There's a woman wanted here. I want a wife, and I'll have nobody but you. I built this house for you,

Minnie Lindsay, and now I ask you to come and live in it."

Minnie shrank away from the arm that would have clasped her, and shivered.

"I thank you, Mr. Hunter, but I cannot. I never dreamed of such a proposal from you. You can easily get some one who will suit you better. Excuse me: I must go now."

"Stop," he said roughly, closing the door before her. "I want a civil answer, at least. I suppose you think that somebody's servant-girl would suit me better."

"I did n't mean anything that need offend you," she replied calmly, though she was both angry and frightened.

He looked a man to be afraid of. He towered far above her head, and the muscular arm and hand half extended toward her were strong enough to catch and swing her out the door like a weed. His bold blue eyes shone with a hard, metallic lustre, and there was something cruel and implacable in the down-drawn corners of his heavy mouth.

But, as she looked, he melted, and the smile softened every harsh line and light. It was a wonder where he got that smile: perhaps his mother had possessed some element of sweetness, and, dying, had dropped this one fragment of her womanly mantle on his rugged nature. Ralph Hunter had not expected immediate surrender, and he did not want to frighten the girl.

"Don't look so much as if I was a bear," he said, in a voice that was really soft. "I'm a rough fellow, but I would n't hurt you for my life. I have n't got the soft, hypocritical ways of some people you know, but maybe I am as sincere and as good as they are. There's the door open, and you can go. But I wish you'd stop a minute."

Minnie paused under the beautiful granite portal, and looked at the man.

"No one would wonder that I fear you when you are angry," she said. "But you are so strange that I don't know what to think."

"Are you engaged?" he asked, looking at her with a keen, unscrupulous gaze that would not be evaded or deceived.

"I am not," she said promptly. "I tell you, though you have no right to ask. But that makes no difference; for, Mr. Hunter, I shall never marry you."

"Perhaps you won't," he said, laughing with careless scorn; "and, Minnie Lindsay, perhaps you will. I can wait till you think

it over." And he sauntered away, leaving her free to go.

She hurried down through the garden, scarce drawing a free breath till she was outside the enclosure. She did n't like the man's composure under his disappointment, and was afraid he intended to persecute her. She had always heard that he would never give up anything on which his will was set, and though she had no fears of being made to marry him against her will, she thought he might annoy her a great deal.

After this interview, the thought of Charles Gardiner came over her like the soft south wind after a tempest. "What would he say if he knew?" had been her first thought after reaching the street; and though she tried hard to convince herself that it was none of his business, and that he would not care in the least, I am very glad that Minnie's salvation did not depend on her believing it as an article of faith.

This gentleman was principal of the school in which Minnie was one of the under teachers. His small patrimony had been expended on his education, and now, while pursuing his law-studies, he supported himself by teaching.

There had been no talk of love between these two, but there was a tacit understanding that each was first with the other. Perhaps, had Mr. Gardiner's delicacy been less, there would have been something said before; but they were almost strangers yet, he thought, after an acquaintance of a year, and almost daily meetings. Besides, he could not marry till he was settled in his profession, and they were quite happy as they were. So their intercourse glided tranquilly on, looking more like a tender friendship than an exclusive love. When the class hours were over, Minnie always lingered in her room a little longer than was necessary, and was sure to find Charles Gardiner waiting for her in the entry when she went out.

He always avoided paying her any attentions that would create remark, but she knew that he showed still less devotion to all other ladies.

To compare these two men in her own mind was to shrink with horror and disgust from Ralph Hunter. No slightest stain ever rested on Charles Gardiner, and to look at him was to trust as well as admire. Gardiner did not need beauty to make him appear the gentleman, but he had it. He

was slight and elegant in make, and his light, quick step was in striking contrast with the other's heavy, lounging gait. He had the face of a thinker, the gray eyes intense in their regard and somewhat abstracted, the mouth tranquil though a little composed, looking more used to silence than to speech. The forehead was not very high, but well arched, and the brow and nose would have delighted Lavater, — showing a clear, not too cold intellect, and a spirited, decided character. These men were as different as possible even in the tones of their voices. Ralph Hunter's voice was almost muddy, and, though it could soften, was never musical; and his shout was like the roar of a lion. Charles Gardiner's voice was clear, like a limpid stream flowing from pure springs, and its deeper tones were like the soft thunder of an organ. Minnie Lindsay could have told that when he spoke tenderly, you would turn from all other voices to listen.

CHAPTER III.

RALPH HUNTER'S SPIDER-WEB.

Minnie had no opportunity of knowing what Charles Gardiner would think of her singular offer, for he never heard anything about it. She was also relieved of her fear of persecution from Ralph Hunter; for he never crossed her path, and, as she did not go again to his shop, she never saw him.

But she was troubled that her brother never came to see her. After he had remained away a week she sent for him to come up.

"Why don't you come to see me, Jamie?" she said. "I have feared that you might be ill."

James was hurried and fretful, had an engagement that evening, would n't have come up if he had not supposed she wanted something particular. Why did she not come to see him?

"I don't like to go there. I sha'n't go there any more, James."

"Well, do as you like," he said, rising. "But I wish you would be a little more careful not to offend Hunter, if you care anything about me."

"Why, James, what do you mean?" she said, in alarm; for he looked pale and worried, she saw now.

"Why, you know as well as I do, Min-

ple," he answered impatiently. "I am in his employment, and it is a good place, better than I can get anywhere else. If he's angry with you, of course it won't do me any good."

"I have always treated Mr. Hunter civilly as he deserves," answered his sister with spirit, "and no one has a right to require more. I opposed your going there, and dislike being associated with him."

"Oh, you have such high notions," sneered her brother.

"I have always held myself aloof from low and dishonest persons, whether they were rich or poor, James; and, please God, I always will! I have done what I could for you, and shall continue to do so, but if your rising depends on my degradation, then you will not rise."

James Lindsay turned on his heel with some muttered words, and left his sister to weep over their first quarrel. She saw nothing of him for a week, and at last resolved to write him again, entreating him to come to her. She stopped in her school-room to write the note after class-hours, thereby missing the pleasant meeting with Mr. Gardiner, which crowned her every day. She knew that he would wait for her, and for some time could not put her mind to her writing.

Just as she closed the note, tears on her long eye-lashes, and a grieved tremor in her lips, there was a knock at the door. She started with a vivid blush and a smile. Had Mr. Gardiner come to see her? She went to open the door, and was confronted by Ralph Hunter.

"I have something to tell you, Miss Lindsay," he said gravely, scarcely raising his eyes, "something you wouldn't wish any one else to hear. Shall I come in?"

"Won't you go up to my boarding-place, Mr. Hunter?" she said, drawing herself up. "I can scarcely see what business you have with me; but if you have, that is the place to see me."

"I have to say something about your brother," he said steadily, still standing in the entry, hat in hand.

"Have you dismissed him?" she asked quickly.

"No. But James has got himself into trouble."

Minnie grew suddenly pale, and stood with her eyes fixed on him, waiting for him to go on.

"Shall I go up to your boarding-house, Miss Lindsay?" he asked, with what any one less alarmed would have perceived to be a disagreeably triumphant intonation.

"Come in," said Minnie faintly, opening the door for him.

He seated himself coolly, while she stood trembling before him.

"I'm sorry to have such bad news to tell you," he began, watching her face with his hard eyes, "but it must be told. You know I have made a great deal of your brother, and trusted him with everything."

Minnie nodded, unable to speak.

"I thought he was honest," said Ralph Hunter slowly.

Minnie gasped for breath. He rose, and placed a chair for her.

"Miss Lindsay, your brother has been using money that does not belong to him, for the last six months. He has stolen five hundred dollars, all marked bills."

The girl sank slowly into the chair he had placed, and a darkness came over her vision. She did not lose consciousness, but everything grew vague, leaving only a dim sense of pain and fear. She lost sight of the man who sat coldly watching her, forgot who and where she was, and groped painfully in her own mind for some clew to this unknown, dreadful trouble that oppressed her.

"Good Lord! I'd as leave handle eggshells as have anything to do with a woman when she's in trouble," muttered Ralph Hunter. "They always wilt like rags. But I don't believe she has fainted."

Not knowing what else to do, he opened a window, and a cool breeze blew in her face. She sat upright, looked him in the face a moment with bewildered eyes, and then said, —

"Go on, and tell me all."

"There's nothing to tell, except that he has taken the money."

"He must have meant to repay it!" she said eagerly.

"He knew he never could," was the answer.

"Perhaps he thought that I would, and I will. Let me go to him."

"Stop a moment, Miss Lindsay. He does n't know that I have told you, and he would n't want you to come."

"Oh the disgrace! the disgrace!" she groaned out, pacing to and fro. "My brother, my only brother, a thief. I can never look at him again. Let him go away out

of my sight, and I will pay it all. Send him out of the place, out of the State!"

"Why," he said, with a slight smile, "when a man has helped himself to such a sum of money, the law usually decides where he shall go."

A cry broke from her lips.

"Then he has been denounced? He cannot be saved from utter ruin. Well," she said despairingly, "as he has made his bed, so must he lie in it."

"Going to State's prison would be the end of him," remarked Ralph Hunter. "A man does n't get over that. If he tries to be honest afterward, it's no use."

She made no reply, only walked to and fro, wringing her hands, and moaning faintly, her face white, her tearless eyes half-closed, as though unable to endure the light.

He went on.

"Many a man is wild and ex'ravagant when he is young, and yet grows up to be as respectable as a deacon."

"A thief! a thief!" she moaned.

"James feels pretty bad," he said. "When I put it to him he fainted, but he confessed everything."

She turned upon him, large tears swelling up into her eyes, her lips quivering.

"Oh, save him! save him!" she cried.

He only looked at her without saying a word.

"O Mr. Hunter, save him!" she repeated passionately. "You shall lose nothing. I can soon earn enough to make it all up. No one will interfere with him unless you please. Remember how young he is, only twenty-one, and that he has had no home since he was a mere child, and no father or mother to guide him. You can save him."

"No one knows anything about it but you and I," said the man quietly.

"God bless you! Then there need be no open disgrace."

Ralph Hunter stood up erect before her, and fixed his eyes on hers with a power that made her lower her lids.

"You can't think, Miss Lindsay, that you have any claim upon me. You and your brother were strangers to me two years ago. Since then our intercourse has been just this, — you have refused me with contempt, and he has stolen my money. I wonder that you can ask me to spare him. Most men would, in my place, have him arrested. But I don't want to be hard. If you will

marry me, I will spare him, and set him up in business for himself when he's old enough."

Ralph Hunter never forgave Minnie Lindsay the look of utter loathing and terror with which she shrank from him, interposing her hands as though warding off even the sight of him.

"It is a plot! You put the money in his way to tempt him and to blind me."

"You can't tempt an honest man to steal," he answered roughly. "But I may as well go. I told James that I would come and see you, and he is waiting your answer. Here 's a line he sent you. What shall I say to him?"

She took the scrap of paper he tossed toward her, and read a scarcely legible scrawl:

"Oh, save me, Minnie! It will kill me to be exposed. I was crazy to do it, and you may be sure it is my last sin. Save me, and forgive me, my dear sister. I shall die if I am arrested!"

Minnie wept with passionate sobs over that wild entreaty, and did not, or would not, see its utter selfishness. Her dear and only brother was in danger, and she could save him.

"You have no answer to send, I suppose?" said Ralph Hunter, from the doorway.

"Oh, stop!" she cried in terror. "Don't go!"

He came back into the room. "I thought you had made up your mind," he said.

"You will not spare him on any other condition?" she asked.

"No, I will not!"

She threw herself on her knees, and lifted her hands and streaming eyes to him with passionate entreaties.

"Now this sort of thing is all nonsense," he said, with a little impatience ruffling his coldness. "What I say, I mean, and no man or woman ever knew me to go back from my word. You must make up your mind and answer me now. I like to be prompt. If you will marry me, I will save him, and be a help to him in business. If he has a mind to try, I will make him a rich man. Besides, I will be as good a husband to you as I know how, and give you everything you want. Perhaps you won't be sorry for marrying me when you've got used to me. If you will not, James Lindsay shall be arrested before sundown. Now say yes or no."

Minnie looked at him steadily, slowly chilling as she looked. She saw that he meant what he said. There was a moment of silence, then she said quietly, —

"I will marry you whenever you wish."

A flash of light came out of his cold eye. He had almost given up the hope of conquering her, for he knew that she was, in her way, as determined as he.

"Perhaps you won't be sorry, Minnie," he said softly, going nearer and offering his hand to her.

She hesitated, then dropped her cold fingers into it, shrinking not though he did not immediately release his grasp. She seemed suddenly to have changed to an image of a woman.

"Now I wish to be alone," she said presently. "I am very tired. You will excuse my sending you away. Come up to see me tomorrow evening, and bring James with you. I do not wish to see him sooner, nor alone. Tell him never to mention the subject to me."

She dismissed him calmly and grandly, and he went away triumphant, but abashed.

"If she's going to put on those airs with me, I shall be like the man who drew an elephant in the lottery," he muttered. "But she'd better behave herself."

CHAPTER IV.

MARRIAGE-BELLS.

Mr. Gardiner did not see Minnie for a week, which he thought very odd. She came at the last minute, and hurried away before he could get rid of his class. When, at last, he met her in the entry one morning, she seemed hurried and cold, and in the twilight of the place he could scarcely see her face. Then she procured a substitute, and came no more to the school. The first notice he had of this change was when the strange face confronted him in her place.

"Miss Lindsay had asked her to fill her place till vacation," was all the new teacher could tell.

"Was Miss Lindsay ill?"

"Why, not ill, perhaps, but not looking very well."

That evening Charles Gardiner went up to Mrs. Land's, and entered her parlor, to find Ralph Hunter seated there quite at home, and Minnie looking over a package

of photographic views which he had just brought her.

Minnie had been looking for this visit, and was prepared for it. Not for an instant did she lose her cold self-possession. She was no longer the frank, graceful girl who smiled whenever she spoke to him, and asked his advice with a childish grace. Even her flaxen curls were drawn back in smooth bands, and, in place of the flower that had always fastened her collar, a golden arrow, ruby tipped. The faint rose had faded out of her cheek, and the dimples had little chance to display themselves.

"I was surprised to find a stranger in your room this morning," Mr. Gardiner said, feeling himself completely chilled.

"I think Miss Adams will do very well," said Minnie. "Excuse my not mentioning the change to you before. My resolution was formed quite suddenly, and I did not meet you. I supposed that you would come up, and so I deferred my explanation."

Charles Gardiner wondered if this was all the explanation she intended to give, but would say no more in the presence of these witnesses. He promised himself another interview soon.

The call was stiff and cool enough throughout, and Mr. Gardiner soon rose to go.

"I guess I'll go," Ralph Hunter said, rising.

Minnie stood in the middle of the room, and bowed a ceremonious good-night to both alike.

"Oh, Minnie," called her intended husband from the door, "you think that over, and let me know tomorrow."

"So the clown calls her Minnie," muttered Mr. Gardiner to himself. "Such men are always impudently familiar if one allows them to sneak at all. I suppose she feels obliged to be civil on account of her brother. Probably he is going to promote James, and so consults Minnie. It must have been his presence that froze her so. Dear girl! I'll tell her all tomorrow."

"Minnie feels bashful about making any explanations," Ralph Hunter said, walking beside him. "I may as well save her the trouble. She is done keeping school, and is going to keep house."

"Indeed?" was all the other could say, — an icy chill running over him.

"Yes. You see, we're all ready, and

thought we might as well be married right away."

"You going to marry Minnie Lindsay?" cried Charles Gardiner, suddenly facing him.

"Yes, sir; I am."

"I don't believe it!"

"Come," come, said the other, laughing.

"Don't let us have any theatricals. I don't appreciate 'em. Won't you be groosman? I expect it will come off next month."

Charles Gardiner was a proud man, and one of great self-command. He immediately walked on, and managed to say, after a while, "I am completely astonished. How silly you have been!"

"We meant to take people by surprise," was the answer.

There was a silence for a moment; then Ralph Hunter said, with his disagreeable laugh, that jarred every nerve in his companion's frame, "I hope I have n't cut you out, Gardiner."

"Certainly not. My road turns here. I wish you good-evening."

When her visitors had gone, Minnie sank into a chair, and began turning over the photographs again, but without seeing one of them. Looking up presently, she saw Mrs. Lane looking curiously at her. The lady blushed immediately, but Minnie was past that.

"I may as well tell you my intentions," she said quietly. "I am going to be married soon, and Mr. Hunter proposes next month. I did not say positively, but I shall probably decide on that. I would like to be married here, if you are willing."

"Certainly, my dear," said Mrs. Lane, greatly astonished, yet also impressed by Minnie's prospective importance as the mistress of the great house. "I am surprised, of course, for I had never suspected such a thing, though I saw that Mr. Hunter was very fond of James. I wish you joy, I am sure, and shall be very happy to make a wedding for you. You will be quite a grand lady up there."

"I don't need a grand house to make a lady of me," said Minnie haughtily.

"Oh, certainly not. I did n't mean to intimate such a thing. Now I must look about me. I shall have only three weeks to prepare."

"There is to be no preparation, Mrs. Lane," Minnie said. "There will be no one present but you and my brother James

for witnesses, and I shall be married by a justice."

Mrs. Lane stared in mute amazement, but Minnie cut short all remark and remonstrance by leaving the room.

The next morning Charles Gardiner came again to see her. She would have avoided this interview if she could, but he was in the room before she was aware. In an instant she saw that he knew all, and unable to say a word, overwhelmed with shame that she should ever seem to him so base, she covered her face with her hands, and waited for him to speak.

He came to her, took her hands away, held them in his, and looked into her eyes. She could not bear it. There was no place to hide her face except in his bosom, and she leaned forward, and for the first time rested against him.

"What does this mean, Minnie?" he asked, scarcely above a whisper, but with such command in his tones, and such a sharp pain in them, as she had never heard before.

"Oh, spare me!" she sobbed.

"Is it true? Do you mean to marry that man?" he asked, but holding her closely as though unable to believe the story true.

There was a half-inaudible "Yes."

He put her away from him, and sat before her, looking at her less with pain or anger than with a sort of bewilderment.

"I don't understand it," he said. "There is some mystery. I must know. He has deceived or frightened you in some way. Why, Minnie Lindsay, you and I did not need words to be engaged. I love you, and I know that you love me, though you never said so. You are not to be bought with gold, and you always despised this man. Tell me what wicked enchantment has been cast around you, and let me tear it away."

"Mr. Gardiner, neither your hands nor mine can rend the chains that bind me that man's slave. I forbid your speaking longer on this subject, if you have mercy. I shall marry Ralph Hunter in three weeks, and God have mercy on my soul! I have promised, and must perform. Forgive me if I cause you pain. I cannot help it. Don't ever come near me. Don't say any more now. Go, and may God bless you."

"Minnie, do you love me?" he asked.

"Yes, I do. I always shall."

"And you think it right to perjure yourself?"

"I have decided. Go now."

He looked at her, as she dropped her face into her hands again, and for the first time his faith in her failed. The hateful thought that this man's gold had tempted her entered his heart. Her attitude was one of shame. He could conceive of no solution of this mystery, except the most evident. It was bitter to think unworthily of her, but what could he think?

"I have been greatly deceived in you," he said slowly. "I will not reproach you, for your own heart will do that. I can only pity you in spite of your splendor. I can easily forgive you the bitterness of my own disappointment when I think how hollow and desolate your life will be."

"Charles Gardiner," she said, standing erect as he turned to go, a bright, indignant flash burning in her cheeks, her eyes meeting his fearlessly, "I cannot bear your scorn. Others may think what they please, but you shall not wrong me so. No victim ever went to the altar with purer heart and hands than mine. I suffer for sins that are not my own. Your love I may lose, and your pity also; but I claim your respect. The soul is above the body, and he is a base sensualist who can despise one who sacrifices her body, her temporal life, her dearest earthly hopes, to save another, when she keeps her soul pure."

"My own! I trust and adore you, and I cannot lose you!" he cried.

But she slid from him, pale and silent as a spectre, and left him alone.

Three weeks later, a handsome carriage drove up to Mrs. Lane's door, and Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Hunter stepped into it, and started on a bridal tour.

CHAPTER V.

AT HOME.

With the first of October there was a bustle at Hill-side, the closed blinds were flung open, curtains waved out of the windows, and figures appeared in the piazzas and garden-walks. Mr. and Mrs. Hunter had returned, and were "at home" to their friends.

Of course everybody came to see them; made their best bow and paid their finest compliments. And everybody went away to say that never was woman so changed as Minnie Hunter. She had been a lovely girl,

she was now a beautiful woman, fair and colorless as marble, and more haughty than words could tell. She received her company courteously, but loftily, standing in a sheen of snowy silk and rare laces.

One thing was very noticeable, also,—the studious respect which she paid her husband, and exacted for him from every one else. If he chanced to make a sensible remark, she never let it fall, and, without quoting him foolishly, she referred to him frequently enough to show that she considered him worth speaking of, and was not, or would not, appear ashamed of him.

"She's trying to make believe I'm not green," Ralph Hunter said to himself; and though he was proud of her, he began to hate her bitterly.

He had thought that marriage would put him on an equality with her, and it had not. Her superiority was more evident in private life than in the chance meetings of ceremonious intercourse. He did n't want his wife to be polite to him, and to feel as though he must take off his hat when he went into her parlor.

Worse still, he more than suspected her love for Charles Gardiner, though their very seldom intercourse was of the coldest and briefest sort.

As the winter passed away, and Ralph Hunter found himself unable to longer endure the restraints of decency, Minnie could have told bitter tales of her life,—tales of harsh, insulting words, and coarseness, and profanity. Such things came naturally to the man's lips, even when he was not angry, and how much more so when he found himself balked in his own house by a woman who would not sink to his level, though she was his wife!

Minnie received all this with silence, even when he twitted her with her brother's crime. But after this taunt she took the first opportunity to tell James that he must go away.

"You must leave Mr. Hunter's employment, James," she said. "You have now paid him all, and I can lend you a little money. Cousin George writes that you can do well if you will go to him. You are not safe here, for that man may talk of what he knows."

"I can never forgive myself, Minnie, for bringing you into such a position," said her brother. "But I really thought he would be a kind husband; and I swear to you,

Minnie, that he pushed me into taking that money. He made me gamble with him, and with others, and then put the money where I could see it. One time he told me that there was three hundred dollars in a drawer, and to count it and see if it were all right. He knew I was in need of money then. I counted, and there was four hundred dollars. I took the one hundred, thinking myself safe, and meant to pay it back some time."

Great was Ralph Hunter's wrath when James informed him he was about to leave him, saying that he had a chance which would suit him better out West.

"You are at the bottom of this," he said to Minnie, seeking her where she was walking in the garden; for the summer had come round again, and she had been married nearly a year. "Here's a plan to send James off out West, and I know nothing of it till the week before he starts. It is your work."

We will not follow his conversation. It was scarcely fit to follow; but from that day Minnie was more than ever afraid of him. She thought that he was going to strike her, and she vowed in her own mind that he would never do so more than once.

Ralph Hunter opened all his wife's letters, and, knowing that, James used sometimes to write her under cover of letters to other friends. At length he wrote to Charles Gardiner. One letter led to another, and at last the repentant brother confessed all the past to his friend, and told the sacrifice that his sister had made for him.

The evening of the day on which that letter was received, Charles Gardiner was going to a party where he would be sure to meet Mrs. Hunter. All the love, that he had tried to stifle, swelled again in his heart. His dear, wronged, suffering Minnie! He knew now what her words had meant when she called herself a victim. He would see her, he would let her know that he sympathized with her, and understood now all her devotion.

It was the New Year's night, and one of the finest parties of the season. Only Mrs. Hunter herself could excel Mrs. Malcomb when she gave her annual ball. The house was not crowded, but was full, and it was just on the stroke of eleven when Mrs. Hunter stood in the door, having just come from the opera.

She looked lovely as a picture standing

there. Her pale face caught a faint reflection from her crimson silk dress, and her lovely arms and shoulders shone yet whiter from the black lace that shaded them. A chain of garnets clasped her throat, and a cluster of tube-roses lay like flakes of snow in the ivy-leaves that formed her coronet. She looked a creature to worship, so rare, so beautiful, so shining.

At sight of her, Charles Gardiner's heart beat wildly. He withdrew out of sight, but where he could see and watch his fair, lost love. How he adored her that night! How he watched every turn of her proud head, every faint smile of her patient, pathetic lips, every movement of her queenly form! As he looked he tried to imagine what she must have suffered. James had told him much, but, of course, there was much that James did not know. He trembled in an agony of distrust at his own imaginings. His love had been a deep and quiet feeling, quiet in its pain as in its hope; but tonight it burst into flower, a passion that swayed him heart and soul, drowning all else. He was willing to peril his life for a word of love from her, he was ready to tear her from this man's power in spite of the world.

While he stood seething with this excitement, she came near, saw him, and extended her hand with a smile.

"Will you never cease growing more and more beautiful?" he said.

"No, never!" she answered, laughing.

Each perceived a change in the other. It was as though two snow images had melted. Minnie was gay for the first time since her fatal engagement, and Gardiner was gay for the first time in his life. It was again "Minnie" as of old, and again she smiled up in his face with all her dimples deepening in the rosy cheeks.

"I had a letter from James today, and now I know all," he said.

"James told you?"

"Yes, my dear, devoted Minnie. I loved you before, but now I worship you. I could kill that man!"

"Hush, Charles. We must not speak of those things any more. I am glad that you understand me, at last, and that thought must be my only comfort. It will not do for me to talk with you much longer, but I must tell you something, for you are my only friend. Words cannot say what I have suffered, but I thought I ought to be patient and silent. But now he has gone be-

yond the mark I set for him, and I consider myself free. My resolution is taken, and miserable as my prospects are, I yet feel happier than I have done before for months. I shall leave him. As soon as I get an answer to a letter I have written to James, I shall go. I shall go West. Shall I tell you what has decided me? Today, Ralph Hunter struck me!"

For the first time in his life, an oath broke from Charles Gardiner's lips.

"I told James to direct his answer to you, and on the day after it comes I shall go. I bid you farewell now, dear friend. Perhaps we may never meet again. You must not seek to say good-by to me, for I don't wish him to have the chance to slander me or injure you."

"Shall I never hear from you, Minnie?"

"If James writes he will tell you how I am. I can promise no more. Now, good-by!"

CHAPTER VI.

RALPH HUNTER'S HIDE.

About a fortnight after the party, Mr. Hunter was obliged to be from home a day or two. When he returned in the afternoon, dinner was waiting, though it was long past the time.

"Mrs. Hunter went out early this morning," the servant said, "and has not yet returned."

Ralph Hunter did not express any surprise at his wife's absence, nor confess any ignorance on the subject, but sat down to his dinner with a dark shade over his face. If she had made a fool of him servants should not know it.

Presently he went up-stairs and searched her room. The jewels lay in their cases, the rich dresses hung in their presses. Not a thing that his money had bought was missing. But a large trunk of hers had disappeared, and he missed some little trinkets which she had owned before her marriage. Evidently she had fled. But whither?

As he was closing a closet door, a paper in the corner attracted his eye. He picked it up eagerly. It was James's letter which she had dropped in her hasty flight, and it told the whole story. She was to go by rail to the city of P—, where he would meet her, and take her out ten miles to where her cousin, George Willis, lived. George

and his wife knew her whole story, and would do all and everything for her. They would be glad to have her with them as long as she chose to stay, and they sent a thousand welcomes. The letter had also contained money for her expenses.

Ralph Hunter was in a white rage. It would not do to repeat or describe its manifestations. He immediately gave out that James was dangerously ill, and that his sister had hurried to meet him, leaving her husband to follow the next day. And in the morning he took the cars.

Charles Gardiner trembled when he heard this story, understanding Hunter's intention at once; but as he was not aware that he had seen the letter, and supposed that he had merely guessed the destination, he hoped that Minnie might keep out of his way.

The weather was intensely cold, but Ralph Hunter traveled night and day. She had one day the start of him, but he hoped to overtake her. He felt a ferocious joy in thinking that he might come upon her in some lonely stopping-place, where she would be entirely at his mercy.

He might have known, he thought, that she would cut up some sort of shine. He had seen it in her eyes that day when he struck her. They fairly blazed upon him, although she spoke no word, only stood and looked at him that way till he sneaked out of the room like a cursed fool. Trust him to grind her down to her place, when once again he got hold of her.

He did not find her on the way. She had fled as fast as he followed, and at length he reached the town of P—, on the morning of the coldest day of the season.

"I want to go out to Willis's, ten miles on the road to A—," he said to the landlord. "Get me a horse and sleigh in fifteen minutes."

"Yes, sir; but do you know how cold it is? You will suffer very much driving that distance. The stage goes over at one o'clock. You'd only have to wait five hours."

"Don't trouble yourself about my health, sir. I'll attend to my own business. Just you get me a horse, and bring me a flask of brandy."

The nearer the man came to his prey, the more eager he became. All law and decency died out of his mind. He had a notion of using his horse-whip about the runaway at the first instant. He walked to and fro, mut-

tering blasphemies while the time passed, then sprang into the sleigh, asked the direction, and drove off across the prairie, through a wind that cut like a sword. Well for him that he took the brandy, he thought, for he needed all the help he could get to face such an intense cold. The sky was a clear, deep blue, and the air all a sparkle in the sun, as though diamond dust flew in it. The snow crust wore an unbearable brilliancy, and was just hard enough to almost, not quite, bear the horse. Of course this made his progress slower, and provoked many an impatient word from the driver. The broad prairie stretched before him as he drove; and he fancied that he saw, far ahead on the white waste, the curling smoke from the hearth where his wife sought shelter. He laughed as he imagined her face as he drove up to the door.

Ride on, Ralph Hunter! ride on to the judgment-seat!

Minnie had flown, breathless, with her heart in her mouth, that long journey. It seemed that the cars lagged, and never were the stops so long. At last she reached P—, and fell into her brother's arms, fainting. When she recovered, he would have kept her there, but she insisted on taking the stage, then about starting.

"I lost your letter, James," she said, "and if he finds it, he will know where I am. He may let me alone, and he may follow me: I cannot say. But if he should come—which God forbid!—I would rather be among friends than here. I have got so weak and nervous that I believe I should die of terror to see him. Let us go."

She was warmly received by her friends, who promised her every protection in their power, and did everything to re-assure and comfort her. Their hearts ached to see her so changed, for the poor child looked almost wild.

For the first time in a week, she lay down to sleep that night, and, after the first fright of waking in the morning, rose, feeling herself freer and gladder than for many a long month. It was well for the merry party round the breakfast-table, that they were not clairvoyant, and did not see Ralph Hunter riding toward them, with hate in his heart, and threats on his lips.

James was to stay with Minnie that day, and, as they sat talking together, in his present perfect love and repentance, she forgave and forgot his past faults, and the

suffering he had caused her. James would hire and furnish part of a house in P—, and she should again be Minnie Lindsay, and come and live with him. She would not be a burden, she said, but could perhaps get a few pupils in music or drawing, to help. She would not speak of divorce now. Let her have time to collect her thoughts.

And all the while Ralph Hunter drew nearer.

"What is that coming?" she asked in a trembling whisper, as a dark spot grew out on the far road.

"Why, a sleigh, I suppose," said James. "Sleighs pass here many times a day; but this is an awful day for a ten-miles' ride. I would n't wish to try it on the prairie. What are you afraid of, you silly thing?"

"I am afraid, James, I am afraid," she said.

He tried in vain to soothe her. She could do nothing but sit, with her pale face, and watch the speck grow larger, until she could see that but one person rode in the sleigh.

Minnie held her brother's hand in a close grasp.

"It is Ralph Hunter!" she cried. I know him. O James! he will kill me and you. I wish we had staid in town, where there would be law and help. Here he will be master."

"There are two men in the house, and three women, and it will be a pity if we cannot be a match for him. Don't be afraid, Minnie: we'll soon send him the way he came. Sit still: if it is he, they will know when he asks for you, and will keep him away. I owe him something, and he'd better not lay hands on me."

Nearer and nearer the traveler came; Ralph Hunter, — no doubt now. The two knew well the giant form, and the long beard now frosted white. The horse came on not very rapidly, turned, and drew up before the door. The driver sat holding the reins, waiting for some one to come out probably.

James and Minnie stood back in the room, hand in hand, looking. The family in the other room had not seen the arrival. After a moment, James dropped Minnie's hand, and went to the window. He looked a moment, then knocked loudly on the pane.

"What are you doing?" his sister cried. "Come away, James!"

He did not mind her in the least, but his face flushed up crimson as he knocked again. Ralph Hunter did not turn to see who knocked. He sat there very patiently, holding the reins till some one should come to take them. The rough giant had grown very gentle during that ride. A child might stroke the frost from his beard and brows without harm. Even his wife might stand before him, without fearing an oath or a blow.

Over the wide white prairie, and down through the radiant blue sky, a Hand had reached and touched Ralph Hunter's heart, — a cold Hand that quenched out forever his brandy-heat and his rage.

When James Lindsay ran out to him, after that second unregarded knock, he met the cold, open blue eyes without a spark of anger in his heart, but only a dreadful, solemn awe.

Ralph Hunter was not the only man who

was frozen to death on the prairies that winter, but, he was, perhaps, the only one whose death freed a slave.

After a year, there is another bride in the mansion on the hill, but few would recognize, in the subdued and tender woman, the Mrs. Hunter who had chilled them all by her pride.

Charles Gardiner need not blush to take so fine a house with his wife, for his business renders him quite independent, and is daily increasing. James lives with them, and never was there a happier or more united family.

The poor know the name of Mrs. Gardiner but to bless it; and all who are in trouble look on her as a friend. The flowers from her beautiful gardens find their way to invalids and paupers, as well as to her own rooms, and no one in all the town need be hungry while Minnie Gardiner feasts.

"TO WHERE BEYOND THESE VOICES THERE IS PEACE."

BY ETHELIN B. BRANDE.

TWO young girls sat in a plain, small, and poorly furnished apartment. The room was evidently kitchen and eating-room, for a small stove that stood upon the hearth with the cooking utensils and plain service of white delf, that were ranged in a dresser upon one side of the chimney, denoted these uses; while a few books, a piano-forte, and implements of sewing also indicated that it was parlor and sitting-room. An open door beyond this showed a neat chamber, with its white bed and toilet. And these two narrow rooms on one of the upper floors of a lodging-house were the sole home of the two sisters.

They were handsomely dressed in mourning garments, and their air of refinement, as well as some small articles of luxury, indicated that their dwelling was far below what suited the condition in which they had been reared.

And in truth this was the case; and as they sat together on this first evening they had spent in their new home, they might well be pardoned if their thoughts went back sadly to that which they had left. Spacious rooms, costly furniture, luxurious appointments, flowers, perfumes, music, were but the fit surroundings for such as they.

It was not strange that their girlish philosophy did not serve to make them indifferent to their new discomforts, or content with bare walls and narrow rooms, or the noise of strange feet in the uncarpeted passage without, or all the thousand things which to them bespoke their fallen fortunes. Yet one, at least, was strong enough for the struggle before her; the strife for daily

bread, and the poor but sufficient needs of their altered station.

Madge and Alice Payson had known poverty in their childhood, but that was long ago, and remained to them only as a memory. Their father had left them, when scarcely more than infants, to the care of a widowed mother, who, with scanty means, had reared them tenderly and well. She, too, died when they were children; Madge, the eldest, scarcely ten years of age. But her dying moments were cheered by the promise of their wealthy grand-uncle, Mr. Robert Payson, to care for them as his children. And, with her latest breath, she had commended them to his care.

Mr. Robert Payson had well fulfilled his promise. Immediately after their mother's death the little girls were removed to Briarwood, the residence of their uncle, and in his house they passed the years of their youth.

Every luxury that wealth could purchase was at their disposal. Their wants were anticipated, their wishes were laws of the household; while they were the pets of their uncle and dearly loved by their invalid aunt. With the exception of two or three years at school, their lives, from the day of their removal thither, had been passed at Briarwood.

Madge was eighteen when she was recalled thither on the death of her aunt, to take her place at the head of the household. Alice had never been separated from her sister, and therefore accompanied her home, to finish her education under the charge of masters.

The mansion, which, with all its magnifi-

cence, had been gloomy in its stillness during the lifetime of the long-suffering invalid, now grew brighter with the presence of these lovely girls. When the years of mourning had ended, and its doors were open for visitors, Briarwood became the resort for the *élite* of the neighboring country, and the sisters were, by common consent, toasted as the belles of the county.

Madge was her uncle's comforter and companion; the mild and steadfast lustre of her character fitting her for such a relation, even to one so many years her senior. But Alice, petite, graceful Alice, was his pet,—a child to sit upon his knee, fit recipient of caresses and bon-bons,—her life passing without care or responsibility in the perfumed atmosphere of household affection.

One day the two sisters went hand in hand to the old man's library. They stood before him blushing and downcast, waiting to be questioned, not daring to speak the secrets their blushes revealed.

Even Madge, so self-sustained, was as very a child as little Alice on this occasion. But her uncle had not beheld unmindful certain indications that her love had gone beyond the household circle; he was not utterly unprepared for her tale, nor entirely unwilling to aid its utterance. Nor, when it was told, did he refuse to sanction the promises she had made to Joel Wayne, the young clergyman of the parish, whom he loved almost as a son.

But that his Alice should dream of love and marriage, was an idea not so readily comprehended. The child, the baby that sat upon his knee,—could she have a woman's heart going out after other loves than his? Preposterous.

The whole thing appeared to him in a light so ridiculous, his wonder and surprise were so genuine, but so unflattering to Alice's newly fledged importance as Renston Howell's *fiancée*, that she burst into tears, and sobbed and pouted in something as much like anger as was possible to one of her gentle temperament.

Mr. Payson was almost alarmed at this outburst of passion. To comfort his Alice he would have promised her almost anything but to give her to Renston Howell. He believed the young man to be false at heart, though outwardly he had the form and features of an Apollo. And he knew that the country had more than once rung with the story of his mad pranks, and that whispers of deeds dishonoring his manhood had privately circulated.

At first he refused to consent to the marriage, refused to see Mr. Howell when he called to plead his suit, tried to reason and to coax Alice out of what he deemed a childish preference. But all in vain. All the wisdom of all the elders is but useless

words when opposed to the unthinking, undisciplined passions of youth. Alice loved Renston; he craved the portion of her uncle's property, which, as co-heiress with Madge, was understood to be designed for her.

But at last Alice's tears won the old man's consent. He would not listen to Renston's entreaties for an early marriage, but made his assent conditional on a delay of two years. Alice was young, and two years might produce some result to save her from a most unhappy fate.

Alas! little did he dream what that result would be.

Madge's quiet joy in her new hopes had, meanwhile, been greatly marred by the sight of Alice's sad face. But now that it had grown radiant again, now that her voice rang out once more in musical tones and melodious laughter, the expression of her intense happiness, the last shadow left Madge's brow. And Joel Wayne looked upon the precious pearl he had won, and saw her again in all her calm, serene beauty.

His was a toilsome life. The large parish, with widely scattered inhabitants, full of the abounding needs of a poor, rural population, found for him a most arduous field of labor. Madge had always been his co-adjutress in all his parish work not strictly clerical. When he should wear this pure pearl upon his bosom, he felt that still more would his toils and cares be lightened by her ready and constant sympathy, her efficient aid and counsel.

He well knew that it was a humble fate to which he was about to consign her, but mutual love, mutual hope and mutual faith like theirs, depend not on external circumstances or high station for their full and happy fruition.

Very happy were all at Briarwood, and looking forward with the brightest anticipations, when suddenly the storm broke upon them. One blow,—a stunning stroke,—and their fair fabric crumbled to ashes.

The family were aroused at day-break by screams and the ringing of bells. Hurried feet were heard in the passages, doors creaked and slammed,—there was all the confusion of some fearful and unexpected event. Alice and Madge, summoned from sleep, hurried to their uncle's room. A silent, awe-struck group was already gathered there. Every eye turned upon the still sleeper, lying there amidst the rich drapery of the bed.

Madge was the first to approach him; she laid her hand upon his own,—there was no answer from the silent lips, there was no answering clasp from the chill hand. He was dead. In the silent night-watches the messenger called him, and the spirit of

Robert Payson had gone forth into the unseen life.

Days passed. The dead had been interred with all the pomp and ceremony that befitted his vast wealth. Then came the bustle of men of business; then came the greedy heirs. There was searching among all the repositories for the will which the deceased had made. His lawyer had drawn it scarce a month before; it had been properly executed, and, by its provisions, Madge and Alice were the sole inheritors of his wealth.

But no will could be found. In vain was the protracted search. There were heirs-at-law, nearer of kin than the orphans,—a brother and a sister, with whom the deceased had for years held no intercourse. The property, in the absence of any will, was undoubtedly theirs.

They came at once, and entered upon the possession. The orphan girls, so lately looked upon as heiresses of all the wealth around them, suddenly found themselves homeless and penniless. True, Mr. Henry Payson pompously offered them a home in his house until the marriage, of which he had heard, should take place; and his sister, though careful to say that young people annoyed her, ungraciously seconded the invitation. Mr. Howell and Mr. Wayne were called to a council, for the girls could not decide, without their advice or approval, on any plan.

Unknowingly they had produced a test for the characters of these two men. Howell had wooed the heiress. All of Alice's sweet beauty went for nothing; all her lovely traits were powerless to bind him to his promised allegiance. With many awkward excuses, for he had the grace to be ashamed of himself, he contrived to make Alice understand that he no longer desired the proposed alliance. She proudly assented to the dissolution of the engagement, and he departed, feeling, if one might judge from his appearance, like a man who had committed a most dishonorable action.

But the pure gold of Wayne's character came brightly through the trial. His home, the humble parsonage, awaited its mistress, he said. And he urged her consent to an immediate marriage, that both herself and Alice might enjoy its shelter and protection.

But Madge refused. Wayne was poor. His large parish afforded him much labor, but small remuneration. She well knew he could afford no luxuries, not even that of charity. She would not burden him with Alice's maintenance. The child was an especial charge from her dead mother.

And here the strength of Madge's character was displayed. She resolved to sacrifice her hopes, her ease, and to enter upon

a life of toil, and thereby provide for herself and Alice an independent if humble subsistence. She gently put aside all her lover's arguments and entreaties. She made her arrangements, and soon, with her heart-broken Alice, found herself the inmate of the poor home we have described.

Madge's accomplishments now became the means of her support. Alice lent her efforts to aid in this work, and in the cares of the little household, but they were feeble and uncertain. She drooped like a flower upon which the storms have beaten. The pet of the household was fading beneath the rude breath of misfortune. She had loved with all the power of her being, and when that love was crushed, the very springs of life were trampled upon.

Slowly, slowly she faded away; and Madge, watching her decay with sad anxiety, had still another sorrow. Joel was in failing health. A neglected cold had produced dangerous symptoms. She saw him seldom, but each time she noted changes: increased pallor, or the warning hectic flush, or the short, quick cough and hurried breathing.

It was a sad fate, that of this young girl, to see those she loved best fading from her sight, and feel herself powerless to aid them. But still she steadfastly kept on her appointed path of duty and labor.

So slowly passed the weary months. On a glorious summer night Alice died. The withered petals of the crushed flower fell away. Her pure soul exhaled, and went to heaven.

When the funeral passed into Briarwood churchyard, the young pastor did not come forth to meet it. Prostrated by illness that seemed mortal, he lay within hearing of the tolling bell that sounded a dirge over Alice's new-made grave.

Most gladly would Madge have devoted herself to him. But she could give but brief space to her desires. Alice's long illness had left heavy debts on Madge's hands. The poor cannot afford the luxury of indolent grief. She was forced to return to the scene of her labors.

Daily came little notes from Mrs. James, Wayne's housekeeper. They cheered the lonely, toiling girl, for they mentioned his apparent improvement. But the physicians were not so easily deceived. They suddenly ordered him to a southern climate, as the only means of prolonging his life. Suddenly the news of his contemplated voyage came to Madge.

"Mr. Wayne earnestly desires you to write to him at once, dear Miss Madge," wrote Mrs. James, "and if possible come and see him, if only for an hour, before he leaves home."

The first shock of this announcement over, Madge sat down to write the letter for which she knew Joel was longing. She opened her desk, an ancient one of some rare inlaid wood, which had been the property of her uncle. The last time she looked upon him in life, he leaned over it engaged in writing.

After the establishment of the heirs-at-law, Madge had found this desk thrust away among other things regarded as useless lumber in the garret of the mansion. She had reclaimed and converted it to her own use.

With hurried fingers she now searched its receptacles for implements of writing. Her hand struck a slight projection in one of the compartments of the desk, which she had never noticed before. Suddenly a tiny door flew back, disclosing a narrow drawer, in which lay some closely folded papers.

The lost will was found!

Madge read enough to satisfy her of this, and then, laying aside Joel's letter, she went out and sought the residence of the lawyer who drew it, fortunately near her own. He was absent, and would not return until the following day. She was forced, therefore, to curb her impatience. She would not tell Joel of the discovery, until she could tell him whether it were valuable. So she wrote him that she would be with him on the third day, and waited with what patience she could.

In due time Mr. Owen, the legal gentle-

man, returned. He at once pronounced the will genuine, and found with it the schedule of the property which he had himself prepared.

Madge only waited for this confirmation of her hopes. She set off to carry the tidings to her lover. He had already set out for the sea-port whence he was to embark. She followed him thither, and, casting herself into the arms that opened joyfully to receive her, assured him that she would never leave him more.

"My post is at your side, Joel," she said. "As your wife I must go with you." And she met no refusal. They were married.

It so chanced that contrary winds detained the vessel, and Madge and Joel spent the first week of their married life in D—.

"I almost think you might safely take your husband home again," said the physician on the morning they sailed. "He has improved wonderfully. Had happiness been among the elements of *materia medica*, I would have prescribed it for him. Unfortunately it was not; and you, I think, will have the credit of his cure."

A year afterward the wedded pair were settled at Briarwood; Joel, with re-established health, entering with renewed zeal upon his duties, with Madge as his helper. Above all the gifts of fortune that she brought him, above all earthly goods, Joel Wayne prizes his precious wife, and only the sight of Alice's grave mars their happiness.

RECOLLECTIONS OF OTHER DAYS.

BY EDWARD DUSSEAUULT.

TROIS RENCONTRES.

I MET her three times: first in London, and, for the last time, in Paris. She was "only a gymnast," and her stage name was Clarisse. She was poetic and pretty. Perhaps I was more susceptible to female charms then than I am now, which I doubt very much, but, let the reason be what it may, my meetings with the young and pretto aerialist impressed themselves so indelibly on my mind, as to make me recall, even at this late day, those *Trois Rencontres*.

It happened in this wise:—

In the year 1861, about one year before the opening of the exhibition, I was in London, and had been there for two months when the first of the incidents herein related occurred.

I had considerable time at my disposal, which I endeavored to improve by visiting the many places of note in the British metropolis. I met with many individuals representing various professions. The stage and arena were represented by some, and the thoughts which I sometimes have of these recall to my mind incidents that were not invariably pleasing.

I became acquainted with the manager of

one of the music-halls, so called, and had a standing invitation to "drop in" whenever I thought proper. I frequently passed an hour, and sometimes a whole evening, there, and I chanced once, when I called during the day, to meet at the rehearsal M^{lle} Clarisse, the aerialist; who, by the by, was not French, but English. She was a pretty blonde with a well-knit frame, and I thought at the time that she possessed the most perfect of human forms. She was attired in the costume she performed in, and was about to attempt a new and perilous feat. I looked at her carefully, and I could not divest myself of the impression that she was, in spite of her compact and strongly built little frame, much too delicate and fragile a person to go flying through the air from trapeze to trapeze.

But I was not given much time to meditate, as I was commencing to do, upon the propriety or impropriety of such performances by women, for the preparations, which consisted of placing mattresses through the centre of the hall for the performer to fall on in case of accident, were soon completed, and M^{lle} Clarisse grasped the ribbon and hauled herself up to the nearest trapeze, of

which there were three. It was set in motion, and as soon as it swung to its full extent, she commenced to perform the different feats she had been accustomed to, in order, the manager said, "to get her hand in," and kept shooting from one trapeze to another, turning summersaults, as she did so, in mid-air.

She appeared to be merely amusing herself, and appeared to do all without effort. At length she successfully performed the feat which she was there to attempt; she came down from the trapeze and went at once to the dressing-room to change her costume, and was soon with us again, dressed in an ordinary, but very tastefully trimmed, street dress.

It was then that I noticed a young and rather good-looking young man with a gold-headed cane, who seemed to be deeply interested in the young aerialist; and I could not refrain, as I studied the expressions of his countenance, from passing judgment on him at once. He was, most unquestionably in my mind, one of those parasites which frequent such places only for some evil purpose; and I noticed, with some pain, that Clarisse was evidently pleased with the notice he took of her. She was evidently flattered by it, and she returned his glances whenever she thought herself unobserved. I ventured to ask the manager who he was, and he replied, —

"Well, to tell the truth, I don't know. Every one calls him 'Charley' here; and I believe he has money. I have received very implicit instructions from Mr. Weston to allow him to make himself at home. I rather think Weston owes him more money than he can conveniently pay just now, and consequently I never notice him, and let him do as he likes."

"He seems," said I, "to pay particular attention to that young girl whom you introduced to me as M^{lle} Clarisse."

"Yes, too much to suit me. I take a good deal of interest in that good little girl, who works so hard to support her mother and deformed sister. That fellow is a rascal, but she can't see it; and, what's worse, I really believe she is commencing to like him. I'm afraid he'll be her ruin."

"But is there no way of preventing it?"

"I'm surprised that you should ask such a question. You know as well as I do that if any one were to warn her against him, she would resent it as an unwarrantable intrusion upon her private affairs. If you want a woman, an innocent woman, to cling to a man, say all you can against him. I'm afraid the thing has gone too far to be stopped by you or me. As to that fellow, I'd like to — well, I'll say no more about it."

Soon after my friend had finished speak-

ing, Clarisse bade us "good-day," and left to go home. I noticed soon afterward that the fellow "Charley" had also gone. He had no doubt followed after, to get an opportunity to converse with her without danger of being overheard.

That night I attended the performance. Clarisse was most successful in all she attempted to do; and she was rewarded by the almost incessant applause of the audience. When she came down from the trapeze and reached the stage, she received a perfect shower of bouquets, — Charley had paid for them and hired people to throw them on the stage at the proper moment, — which she gracefully gathered up; and, as she retired, bowing, out of sight, she gave a last, lingering look toward the stage box on the opposite side. I looked in that direction, and beheld "Charley" looking at her through his *lorgnette*.

At the conclusion of the performance I took my leave of the manager, and shook hands with Clarisse, whom I never expected to see again. Two days afterward I was on board of the *Palestine* and on my way to Madras, which port I reached after a most pleasant passage. The vessel secured a good return cargo, and I was back again at my old quarters near Aldgate, in March, 1862, where I decided to remain until after the opening of the exhibition.

People had already commenced to arrive, and the rival railway and steamer lines were in full competition. In my rambles through the city, I was reminded everywhere, by posters, that one could go to Paris and back *viâ* Boulogne-sur-mer, first class, for two pounds ten; and I concluded to go. I would have a month to devote to sight-seeing in the gayest city in the world, and be back in season for the opening of the exhibition, and to see the Lord Mayor conveyed to it in the cumbersome state coach.

I always kept myself at that time in marching order; for I was just as likely to make up my mind to go to the antipodes as to remain on that side of the globe. I never waste any time in preparing for a journey. I was always ready to start for any place at a couple of hours' notice; and not more than three hours after I had decided to cross the channel, I had booked myself through to Paris and was on my way to Dover. Here I was not delayed much, for the steamer was nearly ready to leave for Boulogne-sur-mer, and the passengers were hurrying to get on board.

I perceived among them a young woman, with an infant in her arms upon which she gazed, wipe the tears from her eyes. Her demeanor, her careworn but strikingly handsome features, her dress, which was very tasteful, and denoted easy if not happy circumstances, her evident desire to avoid ob-

servation, and, above all, the vague recollection which I had of having once seen just such a face and form, although I could not remember who had been their possessor, made me take an unusual interest in her. But I was not permitted to notice her long, for she shut herself up in her state-room, where she remained during the whole passage across.

As soon as she had done so, I left my seat to walk the deck until the departure of the vessel, smoking my cigar and vainly endeavoring to remember where I had seen that woman.

I had not walked to and fro more than a minute, when, in approaching the gangway, I was startled by the sight of another face, which appeared most familiar. This time it was a man's, not a woman's; and it was just as impossible for me to remember where I had seen him before as it was for me to remember where I had first met the woman who had but just before attracted my whole attention.

He immediately went to the cabin; and, prompted by a desire to see more of him, I followed. I took a seat at the table in the saloon, on each side of which, fore and aft, doors opened into state-rooms. He went at once to number nineteen, which was the one next to mine, and knocked.

The door was opened by the woman who had already been the object of so many of my thoughts. As soon as she recognized him she simply said "Come in;" and he entered and closed the door. The sound of her voice when she said "come in," was even more familiar than her face; and I was then fully convinced that I had not only seen but spoken to her before.

Nevertheless, the place and the circumstances under which we had met remained as great a mystery as ever. He remained in her state-room about ten minutes, and, judging from the incessant buzzing that reached my ears, they had a hurried conversation, which ended by her saying loud enough for me to hear, and in a tone that I shall never forget, —

"No, never! I'll starve first!"

He came out, sat at the table, and took up a copy of the *Times*. But I saw what any careful observer might have seen, that he was little, if any, interested in the paper before him. He would have been what would be called by many a handsome man, were it not for the indescribable expression in his countenance which one always notices in individuals who cannot look another full in the face, I mechanically took up a paper, and also pretended to read, while I watched him over it.

His lips occasionally quivered, and he knitted his brow and scowled, as he sat there thinking. He had a sly, serpent-like

look, which was sufficient to make any experienced person mistrust him. Deceit was indelibly marked on his countenance; and in spite of his, in other respects, generally fine and even polished appearance, one could not help turning away from him in disgust. As I looked at him, I repeatedly asked myself the question, "Where can I have met that fellow?" without succeeding in answering it.

When, years afterward, we met again, I knew him at once. I shall never forget his face; and were I a painter wishing to draw the portrait of Vice, I would paint him from memory.

He sat there for nearly a quarter of an hour, when he again sought admittance to the lady's state-room, but without success, for she did not even answer his knock. He turned away muttering, and went on deck. I followed, and, as I saw him pass over the gangway to go on shore, and hasten away at a very fast walk, I could not refrain from asking myself again the question, —

"When and where have I met him before?"

After a common-place passage across the English Channel, we arrived at Boulogne-sur-mer, and in the confusion attending our landing, I lost sight of the lady passenger and child, who had taken up so much of my attention and been the subject of my thoughts during the passage across. The scene at the pier was one of the liveliest imaginable; and the crowd assembled there was entirely different from the one we had left at the pier on the other side. After a short run, only a few hours, we were landed in a totally different country, and elbowing our way through a crowd of totally different people. The American who has traveled hundreds of miles in his own country, meeting Americans and hearing the same language everywhere, can scarcely have any conception of the thorough change which one witnesses here in going no farther than across the English Channel.

As I passed through the crowd I could not refrain from smiling more than once; for already some of my English fellow-passengers were making themselves ridiculous by speaking French as I had never heard it spoken before. The *fiacre* drivers were vociferously offering their services, and each of them assured us that his *fiacre* was the best, handsomest, and most comfortable, ever made.

My luggage was "booked" through to Paris, hence I had nothing to take care of, and was free to go about as I pleased. I decided to wait till the next morning to proceed to the end of my journey, and endeavored to see as much of the place as possible. I walked along slowly, and went into the first *café*. I had scarcely seated myself,

when I heard a plaintive cry like that of a sick infant. I turned, and there, seated at the next table, was my fellow-passenger with the child. * I felt impelled to speak to her and ascertain where we had first met. I hardly knew in what language to address her, but concluded to speak French.

Speaking to a lady under such circumstances would be considered by most here, and in England, rude; but it is quite proper in France, providing you think the lady in question is not single. It was for that reason that I spoke French. I knew, of course, that she spoke English, for her "come in," as she had admitted the fellow who had followed her on board of the steamer, to her state-room, and her "No, never! I'll starve first!" just before he had come out, were well impressed on my brain. Our eyes met, and, lifting my hat, I bowed and said,—

"*Madame est étrangère, n'est-ce pas ?*"

"Yes, sir," she replied in French.

"English?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then let us, by all means, speak English," said I, "and as you are a stranger here, allow me to offer my services."

"Oh, thank you; I fully appreciate your kind motives in making this offer. I shall accept it in the same spirit as that in which it was made. But permit me first to ask if you are acquainted in London?"

"More so than many a Londoner," replied I, "and I think I must have met you there."

"I thought so as soon as I saw you on board of the steamer. I perceived that you, evidently, thought the same. Can't you remember where it was that we met?"

"No," said I. "I cannot recollect anything save your face and voice, which are both very familiar."

She cast her eyes down, and said, as if speaking to herself,—

"No one remembers or cares for me, now," and, looking up into my face, she added,—

"And you, too, you do not remember Clarisse?"

"What! Clarisse, whom I met at Weston's!"

"The same," said she, extending her hand.

I shook it heartily; and, as I did so, I recalled the fellow who had visited her in her state-room on board the steamer, and said,—

"And the gentleman who had an interview with you on board, he was whom we called 'Charley,' I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," she replied; and she perceived that I was gazing at the child.

I thought she blushed, slightly, as she added,—

"I hope that's the last time I shall ever see him."

That was sufficient. I could say no more, I thought, about that individual without treading on forbidden ground, and refrained from doing so. The truth was revealed to me. "Charley" was the father of that poor child, and she was the "victim of a misplaced confidence."

My thoughts reverted back to the first time I saw her, and I remembered the words of the manager at Weston's and the feeling he manifested as he said,—

"I take a good deal of interest in that little girl; she works hard to support her mother and deformed sister."

I remembered her as she then appeared: first, dressed ready to haul herself up to the trapeze, then flying through the air from one to the other, and finally succeeding in the attempt to perform the new feat, which was then, at least, considered to be an exceedingly difficult one, and which I have never seen any one attempt since. I also remembered the evening performance, how well she was received by the audience, how they applauded, the shower of bouquets thrown to her, as she lowered herself back to the stage, and the lingering look she directed toward the stage box on the opposite side, whence "Charley" was gazing at her through the *lorgnette*. But I did not pause to reflect long; for I did not wish her to perceive the drift of my thoughts. I quickly added,—

"When did you last see our friend, the manager?"

"Day before yesterday. He is still at Weston's. You may well call him friend; he is the best friend I have. I confide everything to him, and I have left money with him to supply the wants of my poor mother and sister. I know he will be of great service to them. I have an engagement at the Porte St. Martin, and hope to obtain others here."

"Then you intend to remain on this side for some time?"

"That will depend altogether upon the success I shall meet with. When do you start for Paris?"

"I intended," said I, "to start tomorrow morning; but if I can be of service to you in any way, I will remain longer."

"Thank you; I did not ask for that. I cannot go on for a few days. I have business that will detain me here till, at least, the first of the week. But you can serve me in Paris better than here."

"And you may rest assured that I shall gladly fulfill any commission you may please to intrust to me."

"I am sure you will; and, if it is not asking too much, I would like to have you call at the Porte St. Martin and see the director

to assure him that I shall not fail to fulfill my engagement. Tell him what you know about me, and give him this note. I have learned that he has been disappointed many times by aerialists. He may be getting uneasy about me; and this note, together with what you will say to him, will re-assure him."

"Is that all?" said I, taking the note.

"Yes, thank you."

We left the *café* and parted at the door of the hotel, each expressing the hope of speedily meeting again.

I retired that night with strange thoughts. I had, unexpectedly, again met Clarisse. She was a mother now, and I believed that the father of her child deserved to be cursed. The thought that she was, perhaps, as blamable as he, never intruded itself even once. My indignation was all turned against him. I believed her to be truthful in spite of appearances. I considered that the manager at "Weston's," judging by the estimation in which he was held by some of my friends whose probity was undoubted, would not have taken so much interest in that "good little girl, who worked so hard to support her mother and deformed sister," unless he could respect her. Hence I reasoned that she was all right, and Charley all wrong. She was not heartless. She had left funds in the hands of her old manager to support her mother and sister, who were helpless. A heartless woman would have given them no thought.

The next day I was in Paris. I saw the director of the Porte St. Martin, gave him Clarisse's note, and spent the evening writing letters. The next morning I commenced my rambles through the city, sometimes on foot, sometimes *en fiacre*. I do not, however, purpose to relate here all I saw or heard during the next fortnight. But while taking an afternoon stroll about three weeks after my arrival, an incident occurred which led to my again seeing Clarisse, and that for the last time.

I walked leisurely along the bank of the Seine with the Tuilleries on my left, and turned away from the river at the Louvre to go to the Place Royale. I certainly had all I wanted to see, and I repeatedly stopped in my walk to look all around, so as not to miss seeing anything. I turned in the Rue Rivoli, went down on one side and came back on the other; and this took much time, for I had to stop before each of the tastefully dressed windows of the magnificent stores, until I was back again in the Place Royale.

I kept moving on without noticing where I was going, when, looking across the street, I was astonished to discover that I was in the Rue de la Vrillière. A *gens d'armes* happened to pass, and I asked,—

"What building is that opposite?"

"La Banque de France," replied he.

I had long and still do consider the Bank of France as the bank *par excellence* of the world. It has no compeer. No wonder, then, that I stopped to look at that building, and, while I shall not attempt to record the thoughts it suggested at the time, it will not, perhaps, be digressing too much if I recall to the reader's mind its brilliant record for that feverish period, which may be divided into that of the Franco-Prussian war and that of the Commune.

A French writer of note has very recently said, and with truth,—

"*Au milieu de la sanglante bacchanale de la commune, ce qui s'est passé à la Banque de France ressemble presque à une idylle.*"

Let me, therefore, review very briefly its career during this terrible period of uncertainty, when events followed events, alarms followed alarms, with such surprising rapidity, and nothing, no one, was safe.

As soon as the Germans had forced an opening through the French frontier for the passage of their armies, which had cut off the military communications of France, and were forcing her insufficient forces to retire before them, the Bank of France drew in to its central depository at Paris all its treasures, whether metallic or representative, which were menaced in its provincial branches. That first duty fulfilled,—to snatch from the enemy's grasp the "sinews of war," and to guard faithfully the interests that had been confided to it,—the bank did not neglect another, which was no less urgent.

It was no longer doubtful that the situation was fast becoming one of the most dreadful. Bazaine was struggling under Metz, not without glory, but without results. The remains of MacMahon's army, re-assembled at Châlons, augmented by *mobiles* without instructions, re-enforced by incomplete regiments, which had been hastily marched there, could, it is true, attack the Germans, but could not stop their advance. It was easy to foresee the sorrowful hour when Paris would, perhaps, be the object of a master-stroke, which could not be prevented, save by one of those thousand hazards which so often modify an enemy's success in war.

At this moment the amount of specie in the bank was enormous; and it was a prize which it was necessary to place where it could not be affected by the requisitions which Germany would not have failed to impose upon Paris if she had entered therein by main force. But where could those bags of coin, those ingots of gold, those bars of silver, those moneys of all kinds, be carried? It was Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, who indicated the place where all these riches should be transferred. In a secret corre-

spondence, he addressed his orders to one of his maritime prefects, foresaw all the eventualities, and gave such full, complete instructions, that, if the Prussian army had taken the town he designated, it would have found neither the reserve of the bank, nor the crown diamonds, nor the principal paintings of the museum of the Louvre, which were gathered together in a well-chosen place, without the knowledge of even those who were commissioned to guard them.

The bank improved every moment of the time; for the operation was a long one. It is worthy of remark, that this was kept secret, in spite of the great number of persons necessarily engaged in it, — in the first place, the box-makers who made the cases, and smiled, as they marked them, in capital letters, with this warning, "*Attention! projectiles explosives!*" then the receivers, those people whom all Parisians know as "*les habits gris*," — the most honest individuals in the world, — through whose hands these immense treasures passed; and, finally, the conveyers, all dressed differently, or, as a Frenchman would say, "*vêtus à la diable*," who, having thrown aside the compromising uniform of the bank, rode on the wagons to the railways, where they delivered the cases to the proper officials. All these people kept silent, and were rare examples of professional devotion.

At that moment of suspicions, of passion, and of anger, what clamors, if one of these wagons, carrying away a few millions, had been discovered? What new treacheries would have been imagined! and how quickly the existing government, the *corps législatif*, the generals would have been accused of wishing to starve Paris. None knew anything of these transactions; and, when the fact was revealed to the Parisians, it was to prove to them, in the dark days of the Commune, that there was no longer anything in the vaults of the bank which they wished to visit with too much curiosity.

From the twentieth of August to the thirtieth of September, the work never ceased in the Rue de la Vrillière, night or day; and when the enemy appeared on the heights, which command the approaches of Paris, the treasures of the bank were beyond his reach,

It took five hundred horses to transport it from the bank to the railways; for it weighed one million two hundred and thirty-eight thousand two hundred and sixty (1,238,260) kilogrammes, and represented five hundred and twenty million francs in metals. How many cases were necessary to contain that fortune? Twenty-four thousand eight hundred and fifty-five (24,855). It had been so arranged as to have the box-makers who worked upon them exempted from service in the National Guards, which again neces-

sitated a negotiation which was conducted secretly, and remained ignored.

Thus the bank preserved its reputation, which is tantamount to preserving that of France, whose probity has never been doubted, in spite of her revolutions and the unsettled character of her people. She never even dreams of repudiating; the Republic cheerfully pays the debts contracted by the Empire, and *vice versa*.

I know not how long I would have stood there in the Rue de la Vrillière, opposite the bank, had I not felt a slight tap on the shoulder, which aroused me from my reverie. Looking around, I was surprised to see the honest face of Weston's manager, who grasped my hand, saying, —

"Well, you're the last person I thought of meeting here!"

"And, pray, what has brought you to Paris?" said I.

"Come with me, for I can't go alone; and you'll soon see. Look at that," he replied, handing me a telegram dated at Paris two days before. It was in French; and I read with some surprise, —

"Come at once to the Porte St. Martin. The director will tell you where I am.

CLARISSE."

Turning to the manager, I said, —

"Why don't you take a *fiacre* at once and go there?"

"Simply because the fools cannot understand their own language. I can make no one understand me, here in this cursed hole. That's why I want you to come with me."

"All right," I said, as I hailed a passing *fiacre*. We got in.

"Where?" said the driver.

"Théâtre Porte St. Martin."

The driver touched his hat, mounted his seat, and drove off briskly.

On the way I related to my companion all the circumstances connected with my second meeting with Clarisse, and asked about "Charley."

"The rascal," said he, grinding his teeth, "I'd like to shoot him. But Clarisse is blameless. The child is legitimate. He knew that he would never succeed in dishonoring her, so he made her miserable by inducing her to become his wife. He has abused her fearfully; and she finally decided to leave him. They separated nearly four months ago. He now wants her back again. I don't know what she wants of me. Something has happened. She left quite a little sum with me for her mother and sister."

We reached the Porte St. Martin, saw the director, ascertained the whereabouts of Clarisse, and, as we got in the *fiacre* again, we overheard him say to the driver, —

"*Allez, ventre à terre!*"

"What on earth does he mean by that?" said my friend.

"It's an idiomatic expression, which signifies go as fast as you possibly can," I replied.

My companion changed color and putting his hand in his pocket, said, —

"Tell that fellow I'll give him a guinea extra if he'll drive faster."

I shouted to the driver, and, with a "*Oui, milord*," he applied the whip to the flanks of his already foaming horse.

Neither of us spoke a word the rest of the way, and as soon as we reached the house we both jumped out and knocked at the door. The concierge opened and had hardly directed us *au deuxième*, than we were hastening up the wide stairway. We reached the second floor, and as we did so, the voice, evidently of some very weak person, reached our ears, saying, —

"*Ouvrez ! ouvrez vite ! c'est lui !*"

The door was thrown open, and an elderly woman told us to come in quickly. We did so. My friend rushed to the bed, seized the little hand of its occupant and reverently kissed it, as the tears trickled down his cheeks. He beckoned to me to approach; I did so; and I looked upon Clarisse for the last time. She knew me at once. She held out her hand; I took it and pressed it tenderly to my lips.

"I'm so glad to see you again," she said. "You'll always think well of me, won't you?"

Just then a surgeon came in, and we made way for him. He examined her carefully, and asked if we were friends of his patient. He then informed us that she had received serious internal injuries, and would not live more than five or six hours. Her old manager almost broke down; and had she been his daughter, his anguish would not have been greater.

Three nights before she had fallen from the trapeze, and had been carried home insensible. She had had the best of care, but her injuries were such as to baffle the skill of the surgeon who attended her, and who, I afterwards learned, was one of the best in Paris, viz., Béranger Ferraud, physician to the Prince Napoléon. We remained by her side till she died. She scarcely spoke any more.

Her child was asleep in its crib near the bed on which its mother was breathing her last. The dying woman pointed to it, and, looking at my companion, said, —

"My dear little girl — what will become of her?"

"She will never want as long as I live," promptly replied my friend.

The poor mother took his hand in both of hers, and pressed it repeatedly to her lips. She held out her hand to bid me adieu. I pressed it as I would have done a sister's; and she replaced it in that of our friend, where it remained till she died.

The old manager attended personally to all the details of the funeral, and was chief mourner. He engaged a *bonne* to care for the child until he should reach London, where he intended to engage an English housekeeper, and to keep house, which he had never done before; for, although he was on the shady side of fifty, he was still a bachelor. He fully realized how great the responsibility was which he had taken upon himself in promising the dying aerialist to care for her child as long as he lived. He meant to fulfill his duty in this respect most faithfully; and he has done so.

I never saw either the child or the manager afterward, but I frequently received information concerning both; until within nearly three years. He resided up to that time in St. John's Wood, London, and had his adopted daughter with him, who was pretty and accomplished. The old bachelor had always been very careful, and by practicing the most rigid self-denial, had at length amassed a snug little fortune, which he enjoyed in a rational and temperate manner. Hence I believe that the aerialist's daughter will always be in easy if not affluent circumstances; for I cannot doubt that the old friend and manager of the mother has wisely provided for the future of the child.

I do not consider my first and second meetings with the mother as remarkable. That I had chanced to meet her at Weston's, and a year after on board of the steamer that crossed the channel to Boulogne-sur-mer, never appeared to me to be a notable circumstance; but that I had met her the third time, as I have related, just as she was passing away, seemed to me an uncommon incident. I have never seen a female aerialist since, without being reminded of poor Clarisse, and all the circumstances connected with these "*Trois Rencontres*" with her, who, though "only a gymnaste," had the distinguishing characteristic of a true woman.

TWO SUMMERS.

BY CAPT. CHARLES STEADMAN.

The fair summer day was dead. The low western hills still glowed with the radiance of her last smile; but twilight had shrouded the valley, and on the lonely shore where the brothers were strolling the first beams of the rising moon had fallen, like the beautiful promise of another day.

"A bright omen for our parting, Jack," said the elder brother, stopping to watch the silvery light tremble over the blue waters.

His companion sighed restlessly.

"How often, thinking of home, I have watched the moon rise over the sea! I wish"—

"What, old fellow?"

Jack laughed, taking off his cap and running his hand through his dark curly hair.

"A great many things. You are a lucky fellow, Arthur, to be able to stay in England. I wish that India were a little nearer, or that somebody would invent portable wings."

They walked on for a few moments silently, while the moon rose in her splendor, crowning the sea and the shore with new beauty.

"I wish you were not so far away; I am afraid it is a wrong choice, Jack."

"No, no: I don't think that. The old Berserker blood is strong within me; I could never settle down to the routine of English life. You in your quiet rectory, Arthur, may have more real happiness, but not the wild pleasure I have felt in my wanderings."

"I wish you could stay with us now, though. Is it my mistake, Jack? I fancy you cling to the old house at home more fondly than ever before."

A dark flush glowed in Jack's swarthy cheeks.

"It will be so long this time before I see you all again," he answered. "Ten years! ah, who knows what will have happened then? I say, Arthur?"

"Yes, Jack."

"Did you ever think of getting married?"

His brother blushed like a girl as he replied hastily,—

"Society expects a rector to marry, you know."

"Don't put me off with such an answer tonight. Come, tell me: I have something to confess too, but your confidence will strengthen mine."

Arthur struck away the pebbles with his stick, his fair handsome face still flushed.

"A man of your penetration ought to have guessed, Jack. What do you say to Alice Forbes as a sister?"

Arthur was looking away from his brother as he spoke, and did not see the change that passed over the bright young face beside him. The dusky color in Jack's cheeks faded to a dull white, and his eyes wandered away to the sea, with a hopeless tortured glance that saw nothing of the beauty before him.

"Don't you like her, Jack?" said his brother, surprised at his silence.

"Yes, very much." Jack spoke with a strong effort. "A model wife she will make for a parson. How does she like the prospect?"

"I have n't asked her yet; but I hope"—

"How cold it is here! Let us go in, old fellow."

"But you owe me a confession, Jack."

"Oh, mine will keep! I will send it from India signed and sealed."

"I wish you would tell me."

"Not now. Your pretty romance has spoiled mine."

And, laughing off his brother's questions, Jack went on to the rectory. It was only a few yards from the sands,—a pretty rustic home, with a mighty garden, and green glebe meadows round it. The brothers had been born there, and Arthur had hardly known another home save the quiet village by the sea. His father had been rector there for fifty years, and when he died the lord of the manor had conferred the living upon Arthur, who had been acting as his father's curate for some time.

Jack was a civil engineer, and, though still young, had been away on foreign service. He was going to India, to undertake some Government work, and would be away

ten years. The last few months he had spent at the rectory, learning to love over again pretty Alice Forbes, who had been the playmate of the brothers ever since they made mud-pies and sand-castles on the beach. She was the daughter of some distant relative of Mrs. Barham's, and, left an orphan at an early age, had found a happy home at the rectory.

Tea was laid in the rectory parlor, the table being decked with gay flowers, the leaves of which were glittering still with tears that had fallen on them from soft blue eyes. The lamp was lighted, and the room made bright and cheerful for the little feast — prepared with such aching hearts — for the last night.

"Did you think we were lost, mother?" asked Jack, with a feverish gayety. "Arthur and I have been settling the affairs of the nation."

"You are ready for some tea, I should think. Will you ring the bell?"

Jack sat down by the table, and restlessly toyed with the cups.

"I hope you will play croquet better when I come home, Alice," he remarked, smiling at the quiet little figure opposite to him, whose head was bent low over some work.

"I will try," answered a faint little voice.

Jack made a few more remarks in the same light tone, but his voice failed him at last as he glanced at his mother's face.

There was a little silence in the room till the servant brought in the hissing tea-urn. Jack jumped up to help his mother. Hot tears were in his eyes, but he bravely kept them back.

"Look up, Alice! No need to be so mournful, — you will soon lose your tormentor," he said, handing her a cup of tea. "Arthur, pass me the cake. Come now, little woman, set me a good example."

She smiled up at him through her tears, and took a piece of cake; but it remained untasted on her plate.

"It is not very long, mother, after all," went on Jack, — "only ten summers, ten harvests. If it were thirty years now, I could understand your sad face. Don't look so miserable. We shall meet again, never fear."

"In heaven, I trust, if not on earth," answered his mother faintly.

"On earth first, I hope," said Arthur, who seemed hardly able to speak.

It was a miserable meal for all their forced cheerfulness. The almost untouched dainties were taken away, and the table was cleared; but they still sat in their places, unwilling to feel that the last meeting was over. Presently Arthur was called out to some one on parish business. Mrs. Barham went up-stairs, to see, for the twentieth time, that nothing had been forgotten in the packing. Jack got up, and walked up and down the room with a heavy step, stopping now and then to look at the fair head bent like a drooping flower. He went over to her, and touched her hair softly.

"Alice, sing to me once again."

She rose, went to the piano, and turned over her songs.

"None of these, Alice. Sing 'Tears, Idle Tears!'"

She touched a few chords, her hands trembling violently; and her voice was broken with tears as she sang, —

"In thinking of the days, the days that are no more."

She managed the first verse, but at the second her strength gave way, her voice was choked by sobs, and, clasping her hands over her face, she began to weep bitterly.

Jack looked down at her with bitter pain. An impulse was strong within him to clasp her in his arms; to comfort her with loving, passionate words; to kiss away the tears from her pretty face. Not giving himself time to yield to the temptation, he walked to the window, and pushed aside the curtains to look out at the clear, calm moonlight. The peace of the night fell upon his soul like balm, strengthening and comforting him. The beautiful stars were shining down like the eyes of heaven, and in each steady arrow of light came a message, "Be strong! be strong!"

Alice came to his side presently, her eyes red and swollen, but her tears gone for a time.

"Don't be angry," she said pleadingly: "I could n't help it."

He took both her hands tenderly.

"Were those tears for me, little sister?" he asked.

Was it his fancy? Did the sweet face shadow at his words?

"I wish you were not going away," she said in a low tone.

"Wishes won't avail in this cruel world, and you will soon learn to be happy without me."

Her blue eyes looked at him reproachfully.

"Ah! you will, little Alice. Your sunny spirit was n't made to bear sorrow long. Come: you ought to comfort me. I think I am the person most to be pitied. Dry your eyes: they are looking like drowned forget-me-nots."

He wiped away her tears with her handkerchief, laughing as he did so, and led her to the piano.

"Try again, — not that doleful strain."

But she shrank back.

"Auntie will want me, I think," she said.

And, escaping from the hand that would have held her, she ran up-stairs.

Jack scarcely saw her again. Directly after prayers she went up to her own room. The others sat in the parlor, talking painfully of the parting, and the meeting in the distant years. Hour after hour chimed from the gray church-tower, till the blue dawn beamed over the sea, and shone into the room, when Jack put out the lamp, and drew aside the curtains.

"Come here, mother, Arthur."

The sea was sparkling in the fresh light; the morning star was shining in the heavens; the horizon was glowing like a rose-leaf.

"I must be gone in an hour," said Jack, with a heavy sigh. "When shall we meet again?"

Ten years spent in a foreign land — ten years of struggle, of hidden pain — had dimmed the fire of Jack's eyes, and saddened the bright, eager spirit that had taken up its burden so bravely. He was no longer a handsome youth, to whom ten years seemed little out of a long life; but a grave and an earnest man, his darkly bearded face sobered and chastened and ennobled by suffering.

He stood on one of the low hills above his home, looking down upon the sea. He had come from the station across the river in the ferry, and through the fields where the corn was ripening. Two spirits had journeyed by his side through that sweet walk, — his dead youth, looking at him with beautiful eyes; and, clasped with tender hand, the little slender figure of his lost

love. He stood on the hillside, thinking of these two, — his youth and Alice. In a few moments he would see her, not as she was, — that Alice was dead, with the vanished years, — but as his brother's wife, the mother of many children.

Jack's victory over himself had borne its fruits in the happiness of Arthur. Looking back, Jack felt that he might have won her, — that her first love had been given to him; but never, in all the loneliness of his life, had he wished that he had done otherwise.

Rousing himself, Jack walked slowly down the hill, willing now for a few moments to defer the pleasure of meeting. As he crossed the road, the gate of the glebe meadows was dashed open, and a group of beautiful, sunny-haired children ran out just across his path. A lady was with them. Jack heard her laughing, and saying, in a gay, full voice, to one, "You little rebel! Your Uncle Jack will keep you in order. I shall hand you over to him."

She stopped short on seeing Jack, who was waiting at the gate for them to pass. In the momentary glance he gave her, Jack saw a lady dressed in blue serge, with a sailor hat, and a black silk handkerchief knotted under her white collar.

"Alice's governess," he thought.

The lady looked at his puzzled face with laughing dark eyes, and whispered something to the rebellious little rogue she held in her arms.

The eldest of the boys caught the words, and rushed up with outstretched arms, exclaiming, —

"I know who you are: you are my Uncle Jack."

His uncle caught him up in his arms, and said, —

"My darling boy! Are all these your brothers and sisters?"

"Yes: I'm Arthur, and this is Johnny, and that is Walter, and that's our sister, — she's called Lucy, — and there's the baby."

Jack, very much amused, looked at the lady in charge of them.

"They don't expect you at the rectory yet, Mr. Barham," she said, smiling. "Your brother intended to meet you."

"I came on more quickly from London than I expected. Shall I carry that young gentleman for you?"

"No, thank you. We are going to pick

amnesia in the copse. Come, children: your uncle will have enough of you before long."

With a graceful little bow to Jack, she passed on, calling her troop, who seemed very loth to leave their newly found relation.

"Who is that?" whispered Jack, as Arthur was just running off in obedience to the gentle call.

"Oh, that is Miss Talbot."

The answer left Jack just as wise as before.

It was only a few yards across the meadows to the rectory garden. Jack went on hastily through the fragrant flowers, the familiar faces of which seemed to welcome him gladly.

A lady was at the window, examining a time-table. He heard her say, —

"There must be a mistake, Arthur, this month: the afternoon train can never be so late."

In another moment the book fell to the ground, and Jack held his weeping mother in his arms.

Home again! Ten years seemed nothing now.

Once more in the old room they sat round the tea-table, so happy.

"We are all changed," said Jack; "you the least, mother."

"Who the most?" asked Arthur, his fair face beaming with joy.

"I don't know. Not you. So it must be Alice or I; Alice, I think. — You are prettier than ever, fair lady," Jack added, smiling at her.

She was changed, — from a girl to a matronly woman, plump and fair and motherly; but, as Jack said, her face was prettier than ever, with its bright tints and its sweet expression.

The shadows were lengthening when the children came back from their ramble.

"Here comes your governess, Alice, with your treasures," said Jack, who was standing at the window.

"My governess!" said Alice, in surprise. "I don't possess such an uncomfortable thing. Whom do you mean?"

"I am sure I don't know, — a young lady in blue serge."

"Why, Jack, that's Miss Talbot."

"So my nephew, Arthur, informed me. Perhaps you will kindly add who Miss Talbot is."

"Did we not write to you about the great house being tenanted at last? Well, a rich merchant — Mr. Talbot — took it; and this is his only daughter."

As this little history was ended the children came in. Jack saw Miss Talbot walking back through the fields, and again admired her graceful figure and simple dress.

"Did you ever hear of a statue being erected to the inventor of croquet, Miss Talbot?" asked Jack, finding himself near that young lady in the progress of a game.

"No. Who was he?"

"Another proof of the ingratitude of human nature! I intend to start a subscription for a pyramid of croquet-balls to be placed in Westminster Abbey. Look out, Miss Talbot! You are in jeopardy."

"Oh, dear! I felt so sure of winning. Do have some pity, Alice."

"Evil for evil, my dear. Revenge is sweet," returned Mrs. Arthur Barham, sending the white ball spinning across the lawn.

Miss Talbot walked after it, laughing.

"Don't you like her, Jack?" asked Alice.

"I have n't decided, — I think I do."

"She's awfully clever, and such a dear good girl. We are all very fond of her."

"She is n't pretty," remarked Jack, glancing at Miss Talbot's face.

"Well, I suppose not. It's a wonder she's not married yet; but she is engaged, you know."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, — at least she never told me so; but there's a handsome fellow called Launcelot Murray always down here, and it is as good as settled between them, I think."

"Oh!" remarked Jack. "It's my turn now, I suppose;" and with rather a savage stroke he sent his ball flying through a couple of hoops.

The game was soon over, Jack being victor, and Miss Talbot threw her mallet down, and declared she must go.

Jack walked with her across the meadows. The companionship of the high-bred, talented woman was growing very sweet to him. They were talking of foreign poetry. Jack was an enthusiast for German authors, and strongly recommended Miss Talbot to devote an hour a day to Schiller and Goethe. "They are too mystic, too unreal," she said.

"Ah, that is because you have never suffered! You are not yet a graduate in the school of life."

Her dark eyes looked at him with pity in their glance. No one could gaze on Jack's noble face without seeing there the beauty of sanctified sorrow.

"Well, that must be it," she said. "I have never had much trouble; but still I think in the old times feeling was truer than in these ages. I have never read the classics, except in their English dress, yet it seems to me that the poetry of those old poets is splendid."

"So it is. The old fellows are capital company, although I am afraid it is their age makes them so respected. It is the rust we value, not the gold. You don't know Latin then?"

"Only a little. A governess I had once dragged me through the rudiments, to my great disgust; but I have often wished since that I had persevered."

"Let me teach you," said Jack, forgetting Launcelot Murray and Miss Talbot's engagement. "It would be a real boon. Give me something to do. I wish you would."

"I am awfully stupid."

"So much the better. Come, Miss Talbot, for sweet pity's sake. It is so dull here without an object in life."

"Dear me, I thought you were very happy!"

"Just see what mistakes people make. Let me give you the first lesson today. I heard you tell Alice you were coming over with something or other."

"Well, to keep you from perishing from ennui, I wish I could teach you something in return."

"I think you will, — a very sweet lesson," murmured Jack, shaking hands with her.

She laughed and colored as she went away across the garden to the house.

Jack walked back slowly along the beach. His heart was stirring with a new feeling. A gentle hand was brushing the dead leaves aside, and, lo! the flowers were not dead, but sleeping, ready to waken again and bloom more radiantly than ever! He stood for a minute on the sands, idly flinging pebbles into the calm sea and thinking dreamily. Then he went on hastily.

"Pshaw," he muttered, "what a fool I am! I ought to have learnt something by this time."

And, checking his thoughts with a strong effort, he gayly answered the greeting of little Arthur, who was running to meet him.

"O Uncle Jack, you promised us a row in the boat! Do come today."

"All right. Go and get permission from mamma, and I'll get the boat," answered Jack, glad to have something to do.

He rowed the boys across the bay to the dark cliffs that rose on the other side. It was dinner-time when they returned, the boys half wild with glee and full of the wonders they had seen. After dinner Jack went up-stairs to get some Latin books for his pupil. She was in the drawing-room when he came down.

"I am obedient, you see, Mr. Barham."

"That's right. I am not going to begin at the beginning. I shall put you into Virgil at once, Miss Talbot."

"Just as you please," she answered, smiling, as he sat down at her side and opened the book.

Alice sat by, declaring they were both awfully learned, and the lesson went merrily on. Miss Talbot was an apt pupil, — indeed she knew more than she had said, — and Jack declared that in a few months Latin would be as easy to her as French.

This first lesson was the prelude of many. Jack was soon a great favorite of Mr. Talbot's, and many mornings he would take his books across the fields, and give Miss Talbot her lesson in her pretty morning-room, or under the trees on the lawn. They grew fast friends in these pleasant hours. Poor Jack was learning a lesson, too, very swiftly from his pupil's bright, dark eyes. No Launcelot Murray appeared to break the spell. Jack had forgotten his existence in the sweetness of the flying days.

They had been having a picnic on the rocks, keeping the festival of one of the little ones' birthdays, and evening was come before they thought of turning homeward. Alice hastened on with the nurse and her little flock, and unconsciously Jack and Miss Talbot lingered behind Arthur and his mother. They were very silent as they walked along the beach; the moon was rising, and shedding her silvery light on the waves. Jack thought of that night so many years ago, when he suffered such pain on this quiet shore. He thanked Heaven in his heart for what had been. The woman

by his side was dearer to him than Alice had been in all the delirious passion of his youth.

"What a lovely night!" said Miss Talbot. "It would make a capital picture, those dusky rocks against the light of the sky and the calm sea."

"Yes; the rocks are very pretty, but they are very dangerous. I should not like to be caught below there by the advancing tide."

"I have heard that it is very dangerous," returned Miss Talbot; and, their stock of original remarks failing, there was a pause. Mr. Talbot was waiting for his daughter at the Rectory gate. Jack saw his broad figure, and stopped a moment. He would have given anything to have power to speak just then,—he longed to put his fate to the test.

Miss Talbot stopped too, looking up with shining eyes at the starry heavens above her. The passionate words of the ancient poet rose to Jack's lips. He could not help uttering them.

"Lookest thou at the stars? If I were
Heav'n,
With all the eyes of Heav'n would I look
down on thee!"

he murmured, his voice thrilled with strong feeling.

Startled, and flushing at his words and the light in his passionate eyes, Miss Talbot went on hastily. Her father came to meet them.

"Why, Florence, what a time you have been, my dear! I have left Launcelot Murray at home."

Jack had always been an early riser. The next morning he was up at daybreak, and went out for a row across the bay, and a bath. Coming back, with the disagreeable phantoms of the night half chased away, he drew his boat up on the beach, and threw himself down to rest on a bank of sand above high-water mark. At the top of the bank was a path leading to the rocks, little frequented by the villagers. Jack was surprised to hear voices in earnest discourse, and raised himself on his elbow to see who were the early visitors to the sands; but the bank was too high for him to satisfy his curiosity, and he flung himself back again, and was soon lost in thought. He was

startled at steps pausing close above him, and a voice that thrilled him to the heart saying softly,—

"All is forgotten, Launcelot; love is stronger for a little suffering."

"And may I hope again?" said the man's musical, eager voice.

"Indeed you may."

"Dear Florence, what do I not owe to you,—love, happiness, everything!"

"Only be true to yourself," said Florence,— "only be brave and strong."

Jack heard no more,—the voices died away, leaving the bitterness of their words behind.

"Again, again!" he muttered, rising up pale and stern. "What a fool I have been! Fool!—fool!"

The children looked in vain for Uncle Jack that morning to romp with in the garden before breakfast. No one saw him till after noonday. Miss Talbot and Launcelot Murray had come over in the morning and had had a game of croquet, and many inquiries had been made for the absent one. He came into the study where Arthur was sitting, preparing his sermon.

His brother looked up, laughing.

"Truant, where have you been?"

"Across the rocks," he answered, sitting down by the table and putting up his hand to his white, haggard face.

"Miss Talbot and that fellow Murray have been here all the morning. Miss Talbot seemed anxious about the well-being of her teacher."

"Indeed!" said Jack quietly.

Arthur leant back smiling, perfectly unconscious of the agony his gay words were giving.

"Do you know, my friend, a certain lady has certainly lost her heart to you. Dangerous work, teaching!"

"I did n't come here to talk nonsense," said Jack, getting up hastily and glancing angrily at his brother's happy smiling face. "I'm going to Russia next week; I want you to tell mother about it."

Arthur rose, amazed.

"Jack, old fellow, are you in your senses? What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Don't romance. What is it?" He laid his hand on his brother's broad shoulder, and tried to read the frowning face that was turned away.

"I am tired of England,—that's all.

This idle life will kill me in a few months. I want a dose of good hard work."

"I am sure you can have it here then. Go and have a few days' digging in the quarry, and take as an alternative the study of political economy."

"Don't be a fool, Arthur! There,—I am in a bad temper; I ought not to have come in yet. I'll go and walk it off." He pushed the window open and went out as he spoke.

Arthur let him go without speaking. He was puzzled at his manner; for Jack had generally a very sweet temper.

Desolate-hearted, Jack walked on, not caring whither he was going. In his bitter thoughts he was deaf to outward sounds, and woke to the fact that somebody was calling only by a hand grasping his shoulder.

"Bless my soul, Mr. Barham, are you deaf? I have made myself hoarse in screaming after you. Come back. We are going out for a row, and we want your help. Come."

"I'm not well: I'm tired."

"Stuff and nonsense! Murray is a fish out of water in a boat."

And, without heeding the young man's words, Mr. Talbot dragged him back to where Florence was standing in boating costume talking to a fair splendid-looking man with light hair that shone like gold in the sun. Introductions took place, both the men staring at each other with calm indifference. Jack hardly spoke to Florence. He took one of the oars and rowed out into the bay; but not all Mr. Talbot's lively sallies provoked him to an answer of more than two words. Mr. Murray laughed and talked gayly; but the shadow of Jack's mood seemed to have fallen on Florence, and she hardly spoke.

"Come up to dinner," said Mr. Talbot, when they returned to land; and Florence said softly, "Do come." But Jack was almost rude in his curt refusal, walking off at once.

"What a muff of a fellow!" muttered Mr. Murray to himself; but somehow he did not care to impart his opinion to Florence.

Jack seemed more reasonable when he returned to the rectory; but he adhered to his resolution of going to Russia to undertake some work that had been offered him there. The children were in deep trouble

when they heard the subject discussed at dinner. They looked upon Jack as their own special property, and could not understand why he must go away again.

The first news that greeted Miss Talbot the next morning, when she came, according to promise, to take the children for a walk, was that Uncle Jack was going to Russia and would never come back. Miss Talbot said nothing about the tidings. She walked silently with the two boys over the sands.

"Which way shall we go,—down under the rocks?" asked one of the boys.

"If you like, my dear," she answered.

"Uncle Jack has gone that way. I hope we shall meet him. Ask him to stay, Miss Talbot," said little Arthur.

It was very sweet and pleasant in the shade under the rocks. The boys ran on, enjoying all the wonders of the shore, followed by Florence, who seemed to have forgotten how time was passing. Suddenly Arthur clapped his hands.

"There's Uncle Jack!" he cried.

Florence started, the bright blood crimsoning her face.

"Come,—it's time to go back," she said hastily.

But the boys ran on, heedless of her call.

"O Uncle Jack, Miss Talbot is so sorry you are going! She is going to ask you to stay."

"You had better come to Russia with me, Arthur," said his uncle, patting his bright cheek.

Florence waited, hardly knowing what to do, till Jack came up with the boys.

"I am afraid we have walked rather too far," she said hastily. "Is n't the tide coming up?"

Jack looked round him hastily.

"Yes, we had better hasten back. Give me your hand, Johnny."

He went on in front, half lifting the little boy over the rocks. Florence followed, pained, and wondering at his cold, strange manner. They turned a point where the whole extent of rocks came into view. Jack stopped, his white face growing whiter. The tide was sweeping up over the rocks, fresh and glittering in the sunlight, the blue waters flashing over the path by which they had come. He turned to Florence, who had advanced silently to his side, saying hoarsely,—

"We cannot pass. Look! the tide has

covered every spot of ground: it will be here soon."

Florence looked at him, her face white with terror.

"These dear children," she said, clasping Arthur in her arms. "Oh, what shall we do? Can't you save us?"

"I will try," he answered, still not looking at her. "You take Johnny, Miss Talbot. Come, Arthur."

He lifted the little fellow in his arms and turned back. The tide was sweeping fast round them, shutting out the land, beating against the smooth treacherous rock, which afforded no resting-place for foot or hand. Jack hastened on till he reached a tiny cove. Here in the rock was a narrow ledge, just broad enough to stand upon. He lifted Arthur up, telling him to hold firm, and then Johnny; there was room only for another.

Jack took Miss Talbot's hand.

"You will have to wait here some hours," he said calmly, "but you will be safe. Let me help you up."

She drew away her hand.

"No, no: let me stay here."

"Are you mad, Miss Talbot?" Jack said. "Do you know it is your only chance of life? In a few moments the tide will sweep you away from here."

"You will stay?" she faltered, raising her eyes heavy with tears to his.

"I have faced death a hundred times, and never feared it. It will be sweet to die now, and know you are safe," he answered in a low voice.

She drew close to him, and laid her trembling hand upon his.

"Let me stay with you," she whispered softly.

He forgot in that moment the near presence of death, — forgot everything but how dear she was to him, and that her love was his.

In the softly murmured words, in the

look of her beautiful eyes, he discerned his mistake.

"Thank Heaven for this!" he half sobbed, holding her in his arms. "O my darling, you have made life dear to me! It is hard to die now."

"Heaven's will be done!" she whispered, clinging to him, and hiding her face from the cruel tide.

"O Uncle Jack, a boat is coming! Look!" cried Arthur from above.

Swiftly across the gleaming waters a little skiff was coming to the rescue.

"Look up, look up, dearest! Thank Heaven we are saved!"

The water was rising rapidly round them when the boat came up. Arthur was rowing it. He looked more frightened than any of them.

"Oh, thank Heaven I am in time! They told me you had come this way."

"There is no harm done," said Jack, handing in the two boys, and hiding his deep feelings by light words.

No one had missed them at home, so Alice and Mrs. Barham knew of the danger only when it was over.

Florence staid at the rectory for dinner. There was much to explain to Jack, who was too happy now to care to hear how Launcelot Murray had been engaged to Florence's cousin, and that through his wild ways the engagement had been broken off. Florence had been the mediator between them, and made matters all right again; but she never knew how nearly it had wrecked her life's happiness. Only to his brother did Jack tell the history of his mistake.

Launcelot Murray departed next day to the home of his lady-love, to Jack's satisfaction, for now he had Florence all to himself, and could find opportunities to persuade her that there was time enough to be married in, and see a good deal of Europe before coming home to keep Christmas.

WHAT HAPPENED.

BY ADA F. STRICKLAND.

"IF something don't happen pretty soon, I'll lose what few wits I ever had, mamma," and pretty Lyda Holmes threw down her sewing in a tangled heap on the floor, and looked deliberately at her mother, who sat slowly rocking herself in her easy-chair, and basting up widths for her daughter to sew. She looked up now reprovingly at that daughter, who stood before her the picture of weariness and disgust.

"I am astonished at you, Lyda," she said. "You ought to be thankful everything is as tranquil as it is. Your grandmother used to say, 'No happen is good happen.'"

"I can't help what grandmother used to say," answered the irreverent girl. "Think of three whole days in these three little rooms, seeing nothing, and hearing nothing but the rain outside, the 'rattle bang' of this machine, and the 'creaky cawky' of that old rocking-chair. I can't stand it," and she ran out of the room, up the stairs into her own little chamber.

The mother picked up the sewing, and straightened out the wrinkles, sighing the while,—

"Poor child! It is hard upon her here in these lonely woods, with not a young person in five miles of her. And she was brought up so differently."

There was another sigh, and just then the door opened, and a little hooded and cloaked figure stood within it.

"Good-by, mother," it said briefly.

"Why, Lyda Holmes, where can you be going this rainy day?"

"Going to make something happen. I'm reckless. If you'll look out, little mother, you'll see that it is not raining. I'm going for a walk."

"Why, Lyda," again began the mother. But there was only the rapid tap of little boot-heels to answer her, and the gleam of a scarlet hood through the window.

There had been "quite a spell" of rainy weather, as Lyda's neighbors said, and the ground was soggy and full of water. The small boots left deep tracks behind them, and big drops from the trees splashed down on Lyda's face. She tramped steadily on, though, her spirits rising as the fresh, sweet air greeted her, and the birds called to each other over her head.

"I was born for a gypsy," she said to herself. "I can't breathe easily in the house. I wish I was a gypsy, or anything but my

present self. Mother is foolish to ever think we can, by our labors, pay off the mortgage on this place, sell it, and go back to civilization. She will die of old age, and I shall be gray-headed before that ever happens. But, hark!"

The small, dark head, with the scarlet hood thrown back, was raised to listen.

It was simply the call of a quail to its mate, so full of music, and so like the human voice. The girl laughed a low, sweet laugh, and in an instant sent back an answering call, so like the other that any bird would be excused for thinking it his truant mate. Again the call came, this time nearer than before.

"I'll bring him to me," said the girl, laughing to herself, "and see what he'll do when he finds no bird but himself;" and, crouching behind a large oak-tree, she sent forth her answering note, never thinking that she also might be deceived. Nearer and nearer came the bird-call, until she could hear the faint rustle in the leaves that told her he was close at hand. Then she answered once more, and, on mischief intent, reached out one brown hand, and moved the bushes and leaves close to her hiding-place.

The next moment there was a bright flash, a loud report, and the round arm fell helpless to her side; the earth swam beneath her, and the scarlet hood sank back upon the wet leaves. There was no scream from the pallid lips; so, when the young man who had fired the unlucky shot hastened forward to secure his game, he was totally unprepared to find only the unconscious form of a very pretty girl prostrate beneath the old oak-tree, with a stream of blood staining her sleeve, and trickling over her fingers.

"My God!" he said, "I have killed her!" and straightway, being a youth of a great deal of presence of mind, caught her up in his arms, and ran back the way he had come, until he had reached the banks of a small stream that watered the wood. When there, he laid his helpless burden on the ground, and, filling his hat with water, dashed it rather roughly in her face with such good effect that she caught her breath, strangled, coughed, and the next moment sat up and looked at him.

"What do you try to drown me for?" she said indignantly and ungrammatically, though her face showed very pale beneath the drops of water.

"Because I shot you," was the strange reply, with a gleam of amusement through the alarm in the young man's face.

"What did you shoot me for?" was the next pertinent inquiry.

"Because I thought you were a quail," was the equally pertinent answer.

"Do I look like a quail?" with a great deal of indignation still, though the lips were growing tremulous.

"No," was the grave answer. "You look like a very pretty girl, but you had the voice of a quail."

The crimson blood stained her cheek for an instant, she tried to rise, and then sank again unconscious on the ground. The next she knew, tender fingers were bathing and bandaging the wounded arm, her mother's arms were around her, and her mother's tears were falling on her face.

"Something did 'happen,' little mother, did n't it?" she said faintly. "Where is that dreadful man that shot me?"

"Here he is," said a cheery voice. "Been at work on that poor little arm."

"If I had wounded a poor girl," she said, not looking at him, "I would go and bring a doctor, and not bungle at fixing it myself."

"No, you would n't," was the answer. "Not if you knew you were a better doctor yourself than could be found within twenty miles."

"You have a good opinion of yourself, young man," looking at him now with wide-open brown eyes. "How did you know where to bring me?"

"I did n't know! You would n't stay in your senses long enough to tell me. I simply brought you to the nearest house, and scared your mother almost to death with you."

"Why did n't you let me walk?" a faint flush on the pale cheek again.

"You would n't walk. You insisted on being carried."

The flush deepened, and two tears stole down her cheeks as she turned her head away.

The stranger's manner changed instantly, and, kneeling by her side, he said hurriedly,—

"Will you forgive me, Miss Holmes, for the way I have talked to you, and believe me it has only been to hide my trouble over that unlucky shot? I dare not ask you to forgive that."

She turned frankly, and laid her well hand, which was also her left hand, in his.

"Of course I forgive you," she said. "I thought you were a quail."

"If this poor arm gets well," he said, "I shall not be very sorry for this affair, for I should probably have left the neighborhood without ever seeing you."

This was getting on very well, thought

the mother, for a young man whose name she did n't even know; and, laying her daughter back among the pillows, she arose, and, with the dignity that was naturally hers, asked the young man's name.

"Excuse me," hurriedly. "I had not thought." And he gave her his card, upon which was written "Edward Leslie, M. D., New York," and rose as if to go.

"I beg you will not go, Dr. Leslie," said Mrs. Holmes, while tears stood in her dark eyes. "My daughter's arm will need further attention. As you say, there is no good physician near, and if, as I suppose, you are the son of Dr. Arnold Leslie of New York, I can sincerely welcome you to the home of Arnold Holmes's widow and daughter."

"Is it possible!" cried the young man, grasping the extended hand. "We have searched for you everywhere, and the object of my visit to the West was only to find you."

"We changed places frequently," said Mrs. Holmes, "and after my husband met with reverses, he did not care to let his former friends know where he was, until he had regained his position."

"But that was very wrong, dear Mrs. Holmes," said Dr. Leslie, still holding the lady's hand. "Your friends have been very anxious, and there is a great deal for you to know."

He was interrupted by a sigh of "Oh, dear!" from the patient on the lounge.

"What is the matter, dear?" questioned the mother, hurrying to her side.

"Oh, nothing," in a deeply injured tone, "only my arm hurts so bad, and you talk so much!"

A smile lightened the mother's face, and was reflected on the young physician's, though it was ashamed of itself, and tried to hide under his mustache.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Holmes soothingly to her spoiled child, "we will not talk any more. I am going to get supper, now, and Dr. Leslie, who is the son of your father's best friend, Lyda, will attend to your arm;" and, kissing her cheek, she left them together.

There was silence in the room for about five minutes, then,—

"Why don't you fix my arm if you are going to?" came sharply from the lounge.

"Because I really don't think it needs it, Miss Lyda. I have a better opinion of my own work than that. I think you just want me to talk to you; and, if you will turn your face toward me, I will."

No answer, and Dr. Leslie picked up the paper, and began to read. Then another "Oh, dear!" followed by,—

"I wish anybody would n't make such a fuss rattling an old paper."

"Oh, dear!" echoed the doctor, "I wish

anybody would n't keep the back of her head turned toward me, when her hair is all tangled and her face looks so much better."

The face came quickly over now, and the child-lips trembled.

"You are always making fun of me," she said with a quiver in her voice.

"Not always, little Lyda,"—

"My name is Holmes!" sharply.

"Excuse me, Miss Holmes. I will not forget again. I was only going to say that I didn't use to make fun of you, and you didn't use to snap at me, when we were children together, and I took such good care of you when we went to walk in the park. I didn't think then I should ever shoot you for a quail, and you would hate me for it."

"Who said I hated you?"

There was an unmistakable sob in the voice now, and Dr. Leslie said very resolutely,—

"I am not going to say another word to you, now, until you go to sleep and wake up. You are not a cross little girl as I thought, only a very nervous one. I am going to read you to sleep now."

And selecting a very humdrum article on the different markets of the East, he read in a drawling, sing-song voice until the lids closed over the brown eyes, and Lyda was asleep.

Did she dream it, or was it a fact, that Dr. Leslie, while laying a soft warm shawl over her shoulders, stooped and kissed the wounded arm? She could not tell, and it was a long time before she remembered anything about that evening; for she awoke next morning with a high fever, and for over a week was unconscious of anything but pain.

The mother and young doctor watched together by her side, through long, weary days and nights, and both were unwearied in their efforts to moor again to life the little bark that seemed slipping away from them into the great, unknown ocean of eternity. Her little willful girl was very dear to the widowed mother's heart, and it was not long before she was equally dear to the other heart that watched and prayed above her.

"I cannot let her die," was always his answer to the mother's anxious, continuous questions.

The girl talked incessantly, singing, laughing her sweet, low laugh, and anon her voice would ring out in the bird-call that had caused all this trouble, and then Edward Leslie would hurry from the room to hide the tears that filled his eyes.

At last the scale turned, and the little bark swung slowly back to shore. But it was a very pale little Lyda who lay among the pillows in the weeks that followed, with

her arm in a sling; and a very quiet, gentle girl she was. Dr. Leslie began to wish her saucy ways would come back before they did.

Before very long, however, she began to be the Lyda of old, and from her throne on the lounge kept her prime-ministers busy attending to her wants.

One pleasant evening, for summer had come now, she had been alone almost all day. Edward had gone into the neighboring town, and her mother had been mysteriously busy in the up-stairs' rooms all day. She heard the strange and unaccustomed sound of carriage-wheels in the road, and, looking out of the window, saw a handsome vehicle with two fine bays attached, drawing up to the garden gate.

In a moment Edward was in the room, bowing very ceremoniously before her.

"I called," he said in the most stylish New-York manner, "to solicit the pleasure of Miss Holmes's company for an evening drive."

A glance of joy came into the bright eyes; but she only said, twirling her fan indolently,—

"If I have no other engagement, I shall be pleased to accept."

Dr. Leslie's dignity was gone then, and in less than five minutes he was carrying her down to the buggy, shawls and all, unheeding her demands to be put down. So it was a rather angry face that looked at him from the seat.

"I insist upon going back to the house, sir," she said. "Why am I not allowed to walk?"

"Why, your arm is in a sling," he said.

"I never knew before," she said in her loftiest manner, "that a broken bone in the arm prevented one from walking."

"That is all you know about it," said the doctor, coolly taking his seat by her side, and driving rapidly away. "It nearly always does in gun-shot wounds."

Lyda was very stiffly silent for a few moments, then she said,—

"I suppose that you are aware, Dr. Leslie, that I have no hat or bonnet on my head?"

"Sure enough, you have n't!" said the doctor, with a look of dismay. "You ought to have had that scarlet hood on. What will people think?"

Still he drove rapidly on, and in a few moments the pleasant motion of the carriage and the sweet summer air had restored Lyda's good humor, and they had a very pleasant ride together.

Coming back, he turned his horses off the road into a narrow path through the woods, and in a few moments drew up by the side of a little stream whither he had brought Lyda on that eventful day. He

was a little pale, and his voice trembled as he turned toward her now.

"Lyda," he said, let us be serious for once. I have brought you down here to this spot so memorable to me, to ask you a question. Can you guess what it is?"

"I never was good at guessing," she said willfully.

"Then I will tell you."

"Maybe I don't want to hear it."

"I can't help that, Lyda: you must hear it. I love you, Lyda,—will you be my wife?"

To the infinite surprise of the doctor, she turned upon him fiercely, —

"No, I won't! so there!"

For a moment he was silent with the shock. Then he discovered that the slight figure beside him was shaken with sobs.

"Why, Lyda, Lyda!" he said gently, "do not cry. Is it because you do not love me that you will not be my wife?"

Lyda's face was buried in her handkerchief, and the voice was a smothered one that said, —

"I — won't — marry — any man — that wants to — marry — me just because — because he shot me!"

"Yes," said the doctor, triumphant now, dropping the reins and holding her close in his arms. "But I want to marry you just because — because I love you."

"It was a very happy couple that walked into the cottage that evening, where Mrs. Holmes was just finishing her packing, and announced their engagement. She was a very happy woman also; for, beside this piece of good news, she had heard only the day before that they were rich again, through the death of her husband's brother.

They all live in the city now. On the walls of the doctor's parlor, there is a pretty picture of a flock of quails in a dim old wood, which he says is his favorite picture. And in Lyda's arms is a bright-eyed baby-boy, whom his father will persist in nick-naming "Bob White," much to his mother's seeming displeasure.

And this is just as near as I can tell "what happened."

WHO KILLED HIM?: CHAPTER II.

Morris, Presley W

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WHO KILLED HIM?

BY PRESLEY W. MORRIS.

It was a stormy night in February. The wind howled drearily without, and the rain and sleet pattered down rapidly. But within the library, at Hollyrood Place, a cheerful fire was blazing, and the soft glow of the lamps illumined everything within the apartment. Before the fire sat Colonel Hollyrood, reading the daily paper. Evidently he was a tall man, and past the middle age. He was a handsome man, but very stern in manner, his lips setting firmly together. Still, beneath all his sternness, he had a heart that was not unnaturally hard, and in the depths of his gray eyes could be beheld something of a kindly spirit.

Suddenly there was a ring at the hall door. A servant answered the ring, and the door swung open. Then a firm tread

echoed along the hall, and in a moment a man entered the library unannounced. He threw off a dripping cloak, and seated himself by the fire without a word. He was a young man, with a great deal of manly beauty. His name was Frank Hollyrood, and he was Colonel Hollyrood's nephew.

"Well?" ejaculated Colonel Hollyrood presently.

"Charles Angier is dead," said the young man solemnly.

"What!" exclaimed Colonel Hollyrood. "You surprise me. I did not dream he was so near death."

Colonel Hollyrood and Charles Angier had been enemies. Both were to blame for their enmity, no doubt. Still, Colonel Hollyrood had not intended to let the man, who lived on an adjoining place, die without a

reconciliation, if he could effect it. Good intentions accomplish little frequently. Here they had accomplished nothing.

There was a brief silence, and then Colonel Hollyrood spoke again.

"His daughter?" he said interrogatively.

Frank Hollyrood met his uncle's gaze firmly.

"His daughter, Clara, is now my wife," he said, "the bride of an hour."

Colonel Hollyrood sprang to his feet, his tall form erect. Anger overwhelmed him, and in that moment he forgot that death ought to drive out resentment, that Charles Angier's daughter was an orphan.

"So this is the end of an affair which I have always protested against," he burst out. "You, ungrateful wretch, presume to disregard my greatest wish, and expect favor afterward."

"But I love her, and when you know her you will love her too," pleaded Frank Hollyrood.

"Silence!" Colonel Hollyrood exclaimed. "Tempt not my anger farther, for even as it is I am inclined to disinherit you."

Frank had the Hollyrood blood in his veins. He rose up stern and white before his uncle. You cannot frighten me with that threat," he said. "I have never asked you for a cent, and I never shall."

Colonel Hollyrood fairly foamed. He went to a drawer, and, unlocking it, snatched a roll of paper from it. He went to the fire, and tossed the roll in. Then he shook his fists at Frank.

"Now begone from my house," he cried. "Begone, I say, and never return till you can demonstrate that you think more of your own than you do of the Angier blood."

Frank bit his lip till the blood dropped from it, and then walked slowly out. Out into the hall, and from thence out into the driving storm, he went.

As he had approached the library door a figure had slipped away. As he went out a person was standing against the wall, not far away, perfectly quiet. A pair of black eyes gleamed on him from the darkness. But he neither saw nor knew aught of this.

Scarcely had he got out in the storm and night when he ran against another figure.

"Frank," said a voice.

"Uncle Tom," said Frank.

"Is John in the library?"

"Yes."

Then each went on his way. The voice

of the man, whom Frank called Uncle Tom, had something of trembling in it. He reached the library. Entering, he stood face to face with his brother, for the two men were brothers. Colonel Hollyrood's anger had not cooled yet.

"Brother John."

"What?" exclaimed Colonel Hollyrood sharply.

"I want five thousand dollars," said Tom Hollyrood.

"You can't have it from me," cried his brother. "Another gambling debt, I suppose."

"Let me have it this time, and I will trouble you no more," pleaded Tom Hollyrood.

"How often have you said that?"

"But I will swear."

"You cannot have it, I tell you; you cannot."

Tom Hollyrood rushed out, a muttered curse on his lips. Colonel Hollyrood sank into a seat, and his form shook. Strong, stern man though he was, the events of the evening had been almost too much for him. He sprang up. "Tom," he called.

CHAPTER II.

On the morning after that stormy night, the sun rose in golden splendor. A sudden change had occurred, and a breeze that was almost balmy blew from the south. Breakfast was at nine at Hollyrood Place. At half-past nine Colonel Hollyrood had not appeared.

I wonder why the Colonel sleeps so late," said Harvey Colbraith, nonchalantly sipping his coffee. "It is something unusual for him."

"I can't imagine what can be the matter with him," said Mrs. Colonel Hollyrood. "I did not see him after nine o'clock, for I retired at that hour. He may be in the library, or in his own room, unwell."

And the lady's sweet voice trembled a little. "Sant, go to the library and Colonel Hollyrood's room," Mrs. Hollyrood added to a servant, "and see if he has arisen. If he is unwell, attend to his wants."

The servant went away to obey the command. Perhaps it will be best to describe, briefly, Mrs. Hollyrood and her brother, Harvey Colbraith.

She was a beautiful woman of not over thirty, and looked five years younger than that. Her teeth were white, her lips red, her cheeks crimson, and her eyes dark and bright. In short, it was difficult to discover another woman as handsome as she.

Mr. Harvey Colbraith was handsome, too. His eyes were a gleaming black.

At the breakfast table were two other people, Mr. and Mrs. Silver, guests at Hollyrood Place.

Shortly the servant, Sant, returned. He was trembling violently.

"Mars. Hollyrood is not in de library," he said.

Mrs. Hollyrood screamed and fainted. Harvey Colbraith, and Mr. and Mrs. Silver, sprang to their feet, and rushed toward the library. They entered it.

"Great heaven!" cried Harvey Colbraith. "There are stains upon the floor, and I fear there has been foul work done here."

He rang the bell, and half a dozen servants appeared.

"Go to town for the police," Harvey Colbraith commanded.

When officers arrived, and search was made, no trace but those bloody stains in the library could be obtained of Colonel Hollyrood. Mrs. Hollyrood had come out of her fainting fit, but was in strong hysterics. it was said.

The officers shook their heads gravely, and then decided that murder had been done. But who had committed the crime?

Right there inquiry was balked for a time. Then it came out from Sant that Colonel Hollyrood's nephew, Frank Hollyrood, had been at Hollyrood Place during the previous night. Further, he and his uncle had quarreled.

Mr. and Mrs. Silver had corroborated the last, for they had heard angry voices proceeding from the library during the early part of the night.

Mrs. Hollyrood's and Harvey Colbraith's rooms were too distant for them to know anything about this.

But one thing could be done. Frank Hollyrood must be arrested. He was.

Clara Hollyrood's father was lying cold in death. But she, poor, sweet girl, weeping and clinging to him, followed her husband to the town. The dead did not need her, the living might.

Then the preliminary examination commenced. It went on. How terribly strong

circumstances bore against Frank. He did not pretend to deny that last stormy interview with his uncle John. But he was given no credit for admitting that. It was said that he could not avoid confessing it. He felt that there was a way of escape for him, even when the circumstantial evidence was bearing most strongly against him. But right there came a strong struggle to his heart. Had his poor, weak, dissipated uncle Tom murdered John Hollyrood? It could not be. At any rate, he, Frank Hollyrood, would stand between him and trouble now.

Mrs. Hollyrood was present. "I must see the trial of the murderer of my poor, dear husband," she had sobbed out.

And then Harvey Colbraith was there too. The afternoon waned. The preliminary trial reached an end. Frank Hollyrood must go to jail to await his trial for the murder, and secreting the body of Colonel John Hollyrood.

"Can he not be bailed?" asked some one who had not quite lost all faith in the Hollyrood blood.

"It is not a bailable case," said the judge sternly.

At that moment there was a sensation, for in rushed Tom Hollyrood.

"Where is Frank?" he cried. "Oh, there! My boy, who says you killed John? It's a lie, let him utter it who may."

He paused for a moment, and then shook his clenched fist at the judge.

"Hear me!" he cried. "Why don't you say I killed John? I met this boy leaving the library. I was with him later than he was. More, I have five thousand dollars in money that was John's yesterday. Why don't you say I killed John?"

Doubtless, Tom Hollyrood had been weak on many occasions in his life when he should have been strong. But he was not weak now. In his gray eyes, the only point in which he resembled John Hollyrood, a strong, determined light was shining. No: whatever he had been in the past, he was not weak now.

The officers, who were ready to bear Frank to jail, paused.

Then for a minute there was a death-like silence.

"It is a strange case," murmured the judge. It had been destined for an eventful day. At that moment there was a far greater sensation than before. There came a cry from near the door, and then the

crowd parted and gave way, some shrieking out in terror.

A tall figure, bruised and bleeding, had forced an entrance. His hair was matted with blood, and his gray eye gleamed out as a madman's might.

He lifted one long arm, and fixed his blazing eyes upon Mrs. Hollyrood.

"Murderess," he cried, "the hour of doom is at hand."

It was John Hollyrood.

The woman, whom he had called wife, shrieked, threw up her arms, and fell prostrate.

Then that long arm sought out Harvey Colbraith.

"Murderer, retribution has overtaken you."

Harvey Colbraith gave a spring. But he was seized. He fought like a wild beast, but was finally conquered.

John Hollyrood folded his hands. He began to totter.

"The Cave of the Winds has given up its dead," he muttered. "I would have come if it was to die accusing her."

Then he fell into Frank's and Tom Hollyrood's arms.

When they lifted the woman, who had been the viper in John Hollyrood's bosom, they found that she was dead. Physicians said heart disease. It might have been poison.

Harvey Colbraith is serving a life-term in the penitentiary.

Colonel John Hollyrood did not die. Ever after he was gentle as a child could be. He learned to love Frank's sweet young wife as his own daughter.

For a long time the sorrows of her orphanage hung over Clara, but in her children she became a light-hearted woman.

And I joyfully record it, that Tom Hollyrood, he who had been weak, was henceforth strong.

WHY THEY PARTED.

BY FLORENCE H. BIRNEY.

"I hear that you are paying Miss Greyson a great deal of attention, Felix; do you mean anything serious?"

As Mrs. Dayton spoke, she handed her son a cup of coffee over the cosy breakfast-table, and smiled pleasantly.

Felix Dayton colored to the roots of his fair hair. He hesitated for a moment, and then spoke in a manly way which was characteristic of him.

"I mean to ask her to be my wife, mother, and I hope you do not object to my doing so."

It was now Mrs. Dayton's turn to hesitate. What mother ever feels pleasure in giving up her son to another woman? and knowing that that other woman will be the first to be considered always! that hereafter the mother will hold a secondary place in the heart of the son! But Mrs. Dayton was not a selfish woman, neither was she inclined to jealousy; though a pang of what was almost regret did strike her heart as she heard Felix's answer. She hesitated in her reply to him because she thought he had been in haste in his love-making, and did not know Charlotte Greyson sufficiently well to trust his happiness in her keeping, his honor in her hands.

"I must not object to anything which will further your happiness, Felix," she said at length, when she saw that her silence was becoming annoying to her son. "I trust you are sure of your own feelings, however, and have reason to believe that your happiness and welfare would be Miss Greyson's first consideration always."

"I think she loves me, mother," Felix said, the bright color still burning on his cheek, "and I have seen enough of her to feel sure that she would make me a true wife."

"I had other plans for you, Felix, but of course I cannot be the one to choose a wife for you; I ought not to expect it. Still, I did hope you might learn in time to like Dorothy, for she is so sweet, and so amiable, and, above all, the very essence of neatness."

Felix Dayton laughed aloud.

"My dear mother, what an odd expression to use! But though I like Dorothy very much, she would not suit me as a wife, in spite of her being so amiable and neat. But is not Charlotte also a combination of amiability and neatness?"

"I sincerely hope so if she is to be your wife, Felix. I verily believe I should turn in my coffin if dust should collect on this furniture, and mice and roaches eat the linen, after I am dead and you have this house."

And Mrs. Dayton glanced about the well-furnished, exquisitely neat dining-room with pardonable pride.

"You must not talk of dying for fifty years yet," said Felix. "Charlotte and I will want you to keep house for us; and you can be of great benefit in teaching her how to manage things just as you do; for you have the nicest house in Bayswater, and are a proverb for neatness."

"Well, I was brought up to abhor dust and disorder, and Dorothy has been trained just as I was, so"—

Felix interrupted his mother's speech by springing up from his chair, and kissing her playfully.

"Say no more about little Dorothy, mother. Let the name of Charlotte be on your lips, and then you will please me. I know that if I am so fortunate as to win her, you will be able to find no fault with my choice," and taking his hat from a table near by, the young man left the house.

Mrs. Dayton rang the bell for the servant to remove the breakfast dishes, and then threw herself into an easy-chair by the open window, and fell into a deep reverie. She was not a woman who wasted many minutes in idle thought. Her plump, white hands were generally as busy as her brain; but this morning her heart had been stirred to an unusual degree by her son's declaration of his love for Charlotte Greyson, and she felt worried and anxious. She had wished that Felix might choose little Dorothy Church for a wife, for she knew that the young girl was calculated to make any man happy in the trying state of matrimony.

But it was not to be so: Felix had fallen in love with a stranger, a young lady who had been in Bayswater only one summer, and was therefore little known to Bayswater people. Indeed, Mrs. Dayton had never spoken to Charlotte Greyson. She had met her at church and at the Charitable Fair, but had not sought an introduction. Had she known that Felix was losing his heart to this tall, dark-eyed, handsome girl, she would have made efforts to become acquainted with her, and thus formed some estimate of her character. She was too wise a mother to urge upon her son the advisability of reflection and deliberation, and she knew Felix was too proud to seek to know aught that his beloved did not tell him.

"If she is at all clever, she can blind him to all her faults," Mrs. Dayton sighed, just as the door opened, and a curly, golden head, crowned with a flat, straw hat, was thrust in.

"Well, Aunt Dayton, I never before saw you idle," cried Dorothy, to whom the curly head and flat hat belonged, one by birth and the other by purchase. "Please explain the riddle."

Dorothy had learned to call Mrs. Dayton her aunt when her baby lips first began to lisp, and the name had grown dear to both, and had never been dropped.

"No riddle, dear," replied the elder lady. "I was simply thinking of Felix."

"If thinking of Felix gives you that doleful expression of countenance, the sooner you think of some one else, the better," said Dorothy lightly. "Think of me: I am a good subject."

Dorothy had come into the room while speaking, and now dropped on her knees by Mrs. Dayton's side, holding up her rosy, smiling face for a kiss.

"The best of subjects, Dolly, but I have reason to think much and seriously of the step my son is contemplating."

"He is not going to leave Bayswater, surely?" said Dorothy, the rose on her cheeks paling a little.

"No: he is thinking of bringing some one here to live. He wants to marry Charlotte Greyson, Dolly."

Dorothy started to her feet, and the rose faded utterly from her cheeks, and the blue, childish eyes looked wild, with pain. Just a moment she stood as if stunned by what she had heard; then, becoming conscious of

Mrs. Dayton's curious and pitying gaze, she recovered her self-possession.

"She is very handsome," she said, with a long, gasping sigh, "and I do hope he will be happy."

"But she has not accepted him yet, Dolly, and I almost hope she will not, though of course no woman in her right senses would refuse my Felix," said Mrs. Dayton, whose maternal pride in her only son, and faith in his goodness, were very great.

"Of course not," answered Dorothy, heedless what the words might imply. "But I must not stay here any longer, aunt, for I am expected at the sewing-school at ten o'clock, and it is nearly that now."

"How many little girls have you?" asked Mrs. Dayton, thinking to turn Dorothy's thoughts from Felix's proposed marriage would be only kind.

"There are sixteen in my class," said Dorothy, tying on the flat hat, which had fallen on the carpet when she knelt before Mrs. Dayton.

"Has Miss Greyson been asked to help with the teaching?" asked Mrs. Dayton, forgetting that she had resolved to refrain from mentioning anything calculated to turn on her son's choice of a wife, so greatly was she interested in all that appertained to that choice.

"Yes," replied Dorothy, "Lottie Warden asked her to help us, but she said she did n't know how to sew well enough to teach them."

"She must have been joking," said Mrs. Dayton, whose face had paled at Dorothy's words. "Every young lady knows how to sew, I hope."

Mrs. Dayton was an expert needle-woman, herself, and had taken pains in teaching Dorothy the mysteries of herring-bone, satin-stitch and overcasting, so she had a righteous horror of ignorance in regard to needle-work.

"Perhaps she was," and then Dorothy said she must really go, or she would be late at the sewing-school, and kissed her friend good-by.

But the scholars in the small, close room wondered, that morning, why their youngest teacher looked so pale, and seemed so absent-minded. She was even careless about the way the seams were overcast, and such carelessness had never before been exhibited. Lottie Warden and Della Ferry, the two

other teachers, who were much older than Dorothy, advised her to go home and bathe her head and lie down in a dark room; but Dorothy said she would attend to her duties in the sewing-class.

But when she at last was at home she shut herself up in her own room, and sent word to her mother that she had a headache. Poor Dorothy! she might with truth have said the heartache.

Charlotte Greyson had been visiting her aunt all summer. She liked Bayswater, and she liked her aunt, and she knew she was always welcome in that lady's home; but this was her first visit. She had come to her Aunt Jane's in May, and it was now September, and Mr. Greyson had written that she must cut her visit short. Perhaps Felix Dayton had proved a powerful attraction, for Miss Greyson had not once complained of being dull during her stay, and now regretted that she must go home so soon.

While Dorothy was teaching her sixteen pupils how to overcast seams, her rival was curled up on a comfortable sofa in her aunt's parlor, reading a very exciting novel. Miss Jane sat in a rocking-chair, engaged in darning some large holes in her niece's stockings.

"Lottie, if you would change your stockings more frequently you would not wear such enormous holes in them."

"Now, Aunt Jane!" exclaimed Charlotte, "you speak of stockings just as I am in the midst of a description of the magnificent costumes worn at a duke's ball. I can't think to change my clothes as often as you do."

Miss Jane sighed.

"You are your mother over again, Lottie. I do wish you were more like your poor father."

"I don't," said Charlotte, laughing: "he is as cross as a bear all the time."

"Poor James!" sighed Miss Jane. "I suppose he has his troubles as well as the rest of us. Charlotte, do tie up your shoe, child; and your collar is unpinned."

"There is no one to see me, Aunt Jane," said Charlotte coaxingly, "and I am so much interested in my story. Do let me read."

"But suppose Mr. Dayton should come in and see you in such a slovenly condition, Charlotte."

"But he won't come in at this hour in

the day, aunt; and as for my being slovenly, I must have inherited that, for grandma and mother never pin their collars or tie their shoes."

"Don't tell me of it," said Miss Jane with a shudder. "I want you to cultivate habits of neatness, particularly if you have any idea of ever marrying Felix Dayton, for his mother is the neatest housekeeper in Bayswater, and you might poke in every crack and corner of her house, and you would not find a teaspoonful of dust."

"I don't want to poke, auntie," laughed Charlotte, "and Felix has never seen me otherwise than neat, so he won't be warned of my bad habits unless you tell him. But I believe he would marry me any way, neat or slovenly."

"If it was n't for me, Charlotte, your untidy habits would soon be the talk of Bayswater; and don't be too sure of Felix Dayton, for he is a true son of his mother, and a neater woman" —

"How unpleasant she will be to live with," cried Charlotte. "I know I shall drive her crazy. I wonder if she will sew the buttons on my clothes and mend my stockings as you do, Aunt Jane."

"You speak lightly of it now, Charlotte, but wait until this time next year! I feel sorry for you, for if you live with your mother-in-law you will make her as well as yourself wretched, and if you have a house of your own it will be a sight to behold."

"Look like mother's, for instance," said Charlotte. "Things are always at sixes and sevens with us."

"You should try to make things better, Charlotte."

"O Aunt Jane! I could n't. I have n't your energy, and mother is too much of an invalid to keep the house in order."

"Too lazy," Miss Jane muttered below her breath.

Just then the door-bell rang and a servant came in with Felix Dayton's card.

"There, what did I tell you, Lottie?" said Miss Jane, rising to help her niece in the work of tidying.

The shoes were soon tied, the collar pinned, and the dark, glossy hair smoothed. Then, flushed, but neat and beautiful, Charlotte went into the parlor where Felix Dayton waited her coming with feverish impatience.

It was an important interview. Felix had thought that the sooner his fate was

decided now the better, since his mother had been told of his intentions in regard to Miss Greyson, and he had therefore left his office, and with the eagerness of all lovers, hastened to be relieved of his suspense and anxiety. To his great joy Charlotte listened favorably to his suit, and promised that if her father's consent could be gained she would marry him.

"Aunt Jane, I am engaged," were Charlotte's first words as she again entered the snug sitting-room, where her aunt still sat. "That is, if papa consents, and I know he will, for he is always growling over expenses, and I know I am extravagant. He will give me away with a fervent blessing."

"Do you love Felix Dayton?" asked Miss Jane, drawing the young girl to her, and kissing her flushed, joyous face.

"I do, indeed, Aunt Jane. I cannot tell you how much," was the reply, and the eloquent eyes bore testimony to the truth of the words.

Three days later Mr. Greyson received three letters by the same mail. The first he opened was from his sister Jane, detailing Charlotte's conquest, and giving a very truthful and favorable account of Felix Dayton. The next was from his daughter, and was full of expressions of her attachment for Felix, and hoped that no obstacle might be placed in the way to their marriage. Then came a manly, frank letter from Felix himself, written in such a manner as to win at once Mr. Greyson's favorable opinion. His consent to the engagement was therefore given at once, and in truth he felt pleased at the prospect of placing his eldest daughter in such good hands.

But the engagement did not cause Charlotte to lengthen her visit in Bayswater. She returned to her home at the end of another week, Felix having been in a state of ecstasy ever since the receipt of Mr. Greyson's reply to his letter, and regretting hourly that Charlotte could not prolong her visit.

Miss Jane had accompanied her niece to Mrs. Dayton's to return that lady's call, and Charlotte had made herself so charming to her prospective mother-in-law that she caused the question to rise in Mrs. Dayton's mind as to whether Felix had not done well in passing Dorothy by; and choosing this radiant creature who sang so sweetly and talked so prettily, seeming familiar with any and every subject introduced.

After Charlotte's departure Felix seemed only happy when reading her letters, which were models of penmanship, and couched in such refined and elegant language that he often wondered that such a talented woman should be willing to unite her fortunes with those of a struggling lawyer in an inland town, far away from the delights of theatre, concert and ball. He longed every day to see his beloved, but tried to wait with what patience he could muster for the Christmas holidays to come, for only at that time could he afford to pay a visit to Charlotte's home, there to meet the parents and other relatives of the girl he fondly believed calculated to make his lasting and perfect happiness.

On a cold, snowy day in December, Charlotte Greyson sat in her own room, and abandoned herself to the delight of writing a letter to Felix. The fire burned cheerfully in the grate, and the bird in his cage sang gayly, unmindful of the slovenly appearance of his young mistress, and the still worse condition of the large, finely furnished room. Charlotte had written but three lines when the door opened and her father entered.

"Not gone to your office yet?" said Charlotte, in surprise: "why, what has kept you here?"

"Breakfast was late, as usual," said Mr. Greyson, in a cross tone. "I ask for it at eight, and it is never on the table before nine o'clock; but ever since breakfast I have been searching for those deeds of Johnson's. I believe I've turned out the contents of every drawer in the house, but they are not to be found. Have you seen them, Lottie?"

"I thought you gave them to mamma to keep."

"Well, so I did. I thought I would need them the day after, but she can't remember where she put them. In such a house as this nothing can ever be found when wanted."

"Do you want me to look for them?"

"Yes: try those desks in the parlor. I may have overlooked the deeds. And, Charlotte, copy these papers for me," laying a small package on the desk.

"With pleasure," replied Charlotte, for she was obliging as well as amiable.

Mr. Greyson turned to leave the room. He then glanced back, saying, —

"You really are excessively careless about your personal appearance, Charlotte. Now that you are to be married shortly, you should correct your untidy habits."

"O papa," said Charlotte, in an apologetic tone, "this is only my morning wrapper."

"Well, it is a very much soiled one, and you had better give it to the rag-man. I believe you are naturally slovenly. Your grandmother and mother are so too, and probably it will descend to future generations. I wish you had some desire to emulate your Aunt Jane in habits of neatness; the house might then be less like a pig-pen. Is Mr. Greyson coming next week?"

"On the 23d, father."

"This is only the 20th, I believe. Well, you have three days in which to put the house in decent order. I should be ashamed to have him come into it as it is now."

And Mr. Greyson left the room.

Charlotte resumed her writing at once. As her father had said, she was looking very untidy. She had no Aunt Jane near her to pin up her collar and add little touches to her toilet, or to give good advice on the subject. So she dressed after her own will, and was not seen to advantage. She wore a very old crimson wrapper of woollen material, which had been washed so often as to cause it to fade considerably, and had been worn so much since its last visit to the tub that it had grown very much soiled; a frayed ruffle, devoid of starch, hung limply about the collar; no cuffs were at her wrists, no belt at her waist, and the wrapper hung loosely; her hair was gathered up at the back in a loose, untidy coil, and a comb, out of which all the teeth but one had been broken, stuck into it. A pair of slippers run down at the heel, and a size too large, completed her costume. No wonder her father, accustomed as he was to seeing her slovenly dress, was obliged to notice it on this particular morning.

Just as the letter to Felix was finished and sealed, little Carrie, the youngest of the Greyson family, ran into the room and threw a book on the desk.

"Mamma says for you to copy the recipes you got of Aunt Jane in that book. It is Miss Smyth's, and she wants it this afternoon; she says you promised to bring her the recipes, and she is in the parlor now."

"Well, I did n't bring them, so you can take the book back to her. But look, Car-

rie, see what you have done," said Charlotte, as a black stream from the overturned inkstand wended its way down the inclined desk and poured upon her wrapper.

"I did n't mean to," said Carrie, giving a child's ever-ready excuse.

"I know that, and it's well it has all gone on my wrapper, and thus saved the carpet," said Charlotte, sopping the ink from the desk with the folds of her garment.

"I think I will run down-stairs and look for papa's deeds, and then I'll come up, mend my blue dress and put it on, and then have a good read until dinner-time. I can't put on that blue dress until those gathers are sewed up. I do wish Aunt Jane was here. She could mend while I am hunting for the deeds. But wishing won't bring her, so the sooner I find the deeds and get at the mending the better," murmured Charlotte, as, Carrie having run to play in the hall, she stood before the fire drying the ink on her dress. So, with light steps, and singing a snatch of an old love-song, the young girl ran down into the parlor, stopping once on her way to pick up one of the loose slippers which had escaped from her foot.

Ransacking an old desk, the drawers of which were full of pamphlets and newspapers. Charlotte found a book on a subject in which she was very much interested. The deeds were at once forgotten; she threw herself into an easy chair before the fire, and began to read. So deeply interested did she become in her book that she was not aware how the time was passing. Both slippers dropped from her feet, her hair fell down on her shoulders, the broken comb falling to the floor. Her stockinged feet rested on the fender, a large hole in the toe of one, and a still larger in the heel of the other, being very conspicuous. She was unaware that the parlor door opened, and a gentleman stood on the threshold regarding her with a look of mortification and pain. Nothing was lost to his view: the slippers, the broken comb, the disordered hair, the ink-stained wrapper and limp ruffle, and the holes in the stockings, were all impressed on his memory for a long time afterward; for it was Felix Dayton who stood thus gazing on his well-loved Charlotte.

"Felix!"

A long sigh had roused the girl from her book, and, springing to her feet, she turned in the direction from whence the sound had

come, and saw her lover. She could do no more than speak his name.

"Is it possible that this is really you, Charlotte?"

"But I was not expecting you for three days yet, Felix; and it is so early. I was meaning to dress when I went up-stairs."

"I found I could leave this morning, and was so impatient to see you that I started at once. I did not telegraph, for I intended a pleasant surprise to you. It has been a most painful one to me."

"But, Felix" —

"Do not make excuses, Charlotte. You cannot excuse your appearance. I will leave you now, and return again this evening, when you will be ready, perhaps, to see me."

"But, Felix, I will run up-stairs now, and change my dress. Please stay."

"I prefer not to do so, Charlotte."

And in spite of her remonstrances, he left the house.

He kept his promise, and returned to Mr. Greyson's in the evening. But his manner toward Charlotte was cold and constrained. He had received a great shock, and could not recover immediately from it. Accustomed to the orderly, scrupulously neat house of his mother, he was able to detect the dust and disorder of Charlotte's home, and the sight was painful to him. Charlotte herself was elegantly attired, and looking very handsome, but her grandmother and mother were dressed in such a slovenly, careless manner as to cause a blush of shame to rise on Mr. Greyson's cheek.

When, after a very brief call, Felix left the house, Charlotte went to her own room, and there carried out a resolve she had made when seeing her lover depart expressing no wish to see her again, and without giving her even a farewell caress.

She wrote a brief note, offering Felix his freedom, and regretting that they had ever met; acknowledging also that they were unsuited to each other.

She never saw him again. He replied to her note with a couple of lines, thanking her for her kindness, and hoping she would not cherish bitter feelings against him for coinciding with her in saying they were unsuited to each other, and their marriage could not bring them happiness.

Felix told his mother everything concerning his visit, in the frank way characteristic of him. The good lady sympathized deeply with him in his disappointment; regretted that so talented a girl should be marred by such grave faults; and then never mentioned the matter to her son again, thinking the wound would heal more quickly if never proved unnecessarily.

It was three years before Felix Dayton recovered from his disappointment sufficiently to think again of love and marriage. Then he made a choice which caused his mother's heart to throb with joy and thanksgiving, for little Dorothy was his bride.

Their marriage was a very happy one, and Felix never had cause to regret his second choice. He learned to love Dorothy as well as he had ever loved Charlotte, and perhaps better, and his home was a delightful one, and well ordered. In after years he heard of Charlotte as a writer and lecturer, but never heard of her embarking on the sea of matrimony. Her first love was her last, and she lived and died unwedded.

As for Mrs. Dayton, she surrendered the household keys very willingly to Dorothy, and was frequently heard to say that what was bred in the bone would come out in the flesh, and she could look forward to lying calmly in her coffin since Dorothy would have charge of her household goods.

WICKED LADY WALSINGHAM.

BY MISS ELLIS CLARE.

CHAPTER I.

"East Walsing!"

Cramped and tired, I roused myself from the doze into which I had fallen. Thank Heaven, there were no more changings ahead of me! At last I was at my journey's end.

At my journey's end, in one sense, it was true, but at the beginning of another pilgrimage, for all that, — the pilgrimage upon which one may be said to enter when one first goes out into the big world alone. Alone! What a sad, sad word it is, is it not? I was only eighteen years old, and was going to my first situation. Madame Roche had fed and clothed me, at her own expense, for the last two years and a half, — in fact, ever since my dear mother, the poor and friendless widowed music-mistress, had died in a chilly dormitory at Northumberland Lodge, — and had now decided that it was high time I did those "leetle things" for myself.

Madame Roche, one day, it appeared, had greedily scanned the list of advertisements in the "Queen" newspaper; and a few days afterward she called me to her room.

"Janet Burton," she said, not unkindly, though, "you ought to be earning your daily bread. Listen to me. There is a Lady Walsingham, of Walsing Hall, in Lincolnshire, who is in immediate need of a companion and amanuensis. The salary is good, — forty pounds a year. You will go thither a week from today, when they will meet you at a place called East Walsing. You ought to feel vastly grateful to me for having found you so desirable a home. Any holiday you may have granted you, you will of course spend with me."

Just that, and no more! So at the end of the week I said "good-by" to Notting Hill and my girl-friends of the schoolroom, and set out on my lonely journey to Walsing Hall; to step, as it were, across the threshold of an unknown life.

"Is anybody from Walsing Hall waiting here for me?" I asked anxiously of the solitary porter, who, having dragged out my trunk from the luggage-van, was now regarding it stolidly, perplexedly, as though uncertain what to do with it. "I — I expected that a carriage of some sort would be here."

He looked at me with heavy, vacant eyes.

and scratched his head, as together we stood beneath the dim oil-lamp which hung from the little boarded roof. A very insignificant station was East Walsing.

"There's naught here that I knows on," he said in his broad Lincolnshire tongue; adding, with a slovenly touch of his cap, "Beg pardon, miss, but surely you a'n't bound for that queer place?"

"Where? What do you mean?"

"There must be some mistake, miss. You said you was going to Walsing Hall."

"And so I am," I answered the man, trying to speak boldly, though my heart misgave me and my thoughts were growing troubled. "There's no mistake. I am expected there. I shall be much obliged if you will kindly step into the road and see whether anything is coming or not."

He favored me with another vacant, incredulous stare, and then went to do my bidding. In a moment or two the man was back again.

"There's naught coming as I can see," he said. "You had better bide a while, miss, at the inn just over the road,—the East Walsing Arms. A very respectable 'ooman, the landlady, miss, and a friend of mine. You follow me."

He shouldered my trunk, and I, feeling very nervous and uncomfortable, followed him. The East Walsing Arms almost faced the station; the wide high-road alone ran between. We entered the already lighted bar, and the porter placed my luggage on a settle. I gave him a fourpenny-piece,—it was all I could afford. Ten minutes later I was drinking a second cup of tea, and nibbling my third dry biscuit, the comely landlady of the Walsing Arms—who had insisted upon my accepting the refreshment—standing by me with her elbows akimbo. She looked at me intently.

"It's a rum start, miss, I must say, your going to Walsing Hall," she began. "I wonder how it was as we never heard you were coming. A stranger a'n't been nigh the place for years."

"No?" I said nervously.

"Leastways there's only one creature as visits there as I knows on," added the landlady darkly.

"Indeed! And who may that be?" I inquired.

"Who, my dear? Why, Old Scratch!" was the grim reply.

I started, and spilled my tea in the saucer.

"Don't scare me unnecessarily," I cried piteously. "What do you mean? You frighten me."

The landlady looked penitent.

"There—there," she said soothingly; "don't be uneasy. I meant naught, I assure you. It was all my nonsense,—'t was indeed."

"Then I don't like such nonsense," I returned, feeling ready to cry outright. "You ought n't to alarm one just for the sake of a joke: it's unkind."

"Why, bless the gal! if it comes to that"—

Here the pot-boy looked cautiously round the bar-parlor door, the little room in which I was waiting.

"A cart from Walsing Hall, marm," said he. "Is the young 'ooman ready?"

I rose directly, and put down my cup and saucer.

"Now no paying!" said mine hostess as I once more took out my purse. "You had it friendly-like, and, thank Heaven, I a'n't pressed for a sixpence. Come, are you ready? If so be it's old Jakes as they've sent, you'd best look sharp. He's a surly old beggar at the fairest o' times, and don't like being kept a-waiting. Put the purse back now, or I shall be offended."

I thanked her earnestly for her friendly kindness, and then together we went out to the front of the inn. It was dark and still outside, with only the stars in the sky. A cold, keen March air was blowing up from the low-lying pastures about the house; the gaunt black trees, ghoulish-like in the darkness, shivered and sighed fitfully as the wind crept through their branches. At the inn door stood a horse and two-wheeled cart. A man muffled in a thick coarse coat was perched on the high seat.

"Come, mount, young 'ooman," he called out roughly, on catching sight of me with the landlady. "Sorry I be so late and was n't here to meet yer at first; but t'ould marse slipped into the dike yonder, and was a long while a-rightin' herself. My lady said as how I was to give yer her 'pologies for not sendin' the carriage, but she was a-wantin' it as well, yer see. She's gone out tonight."

"Ay—but on a broom, I'd swear!" muttered the woman's voice behind me. I only shuddered, and said, turning round to her,—

"Will you be good enough to help me to get up?"

She was at my side in an instant, one strong arm under mine, the other guiding my wandering foot. With difficulty I clambered aloft, settling myself close to old Jakes. Such close quarters, however, were unavoidable.

"Bide still!" he said with a curse. But it was to the poor patient mare that he spoke, not to me, and she had but uttered a plaintive neigh, and tossed her shaggy mane.

They hoisted my luggage on to the seat, the good-hearted landlady coming round to the side of the cart in order to wrap my feet more closely in the musty brown horse-cloth which the old man called Jakes had brought with him; and then the pot-boy stepped back into the porch of the inn and cried out, "Right you are!" to which old Jakes growled something unintelligible to the common understanding, at the same time making a sharp, clicking noise with his tongue and teeth; and the next moment we were off. I wistfully turned my head to nod an adieu to the landlady, but she was speaking to the pot-boy and not looking my way. Her voice was loud and hearty, the night air cold and clear.

"Well, as I often tells yer, my lad, ther' 's no 'counting for tastes," I heard her say; "but, for my part, cart ropes should n't drag me to Walsing Hall to go and live with a witch!"

I shall never forget that night-drive with old Jakes across the flat, marshy Lincolnshire country, where the long dikes, cropping up here and there, shone cold and silent, beneath the dark starry sky, and where the sad-looking pollards, so few and far between, were shadowed blackly and faithfully in the pools at their base. It seemed to me a most dreary waste over which we were jogging in that comfortless two-wheeled cart, flat, barren, damp, look whithersoever I would. Deep ruts ploughed the lonely, cheerless road; ruts which, unheeded, must have grown deeper with each passing year; ruts, wet, rush-bordered, and dangerous, into which we plunged every now and then with fearful suddenness, and from which we as suddenly came out again on to the beaten track. I was shaken and jolted horribly, but said never a word. I kept quite silent, and endured the unsavory

thumps against old Jakes as best I could, for I had neither the heart nor the breath to protest. Neither did he speak, unless to anathematize, and that sulkily enough, the tired toiling beast that was so willingly doing its best. Sometimes the faint lowing of cattle afar off would come mournfully over the misty fens; sometimes a strange unearthly sound near the edge of the stagnant water by the wayside—perchance from the bloated throat of the bull-frog—would break the shadowed quietude of the barren marshes. Once, through the fast-rising mists, I fancied I saw a will-o'-the-wisp; but the ghostly, flickering light, or whatever it was, had vanished before I was certain, and I cared not to question old Jakes upon the matter. Presently, almost from beneath the very cart-wheels, something—a bird—started up affrighted, and flew off, with a weird cry, into the chill pale shadows that were gathering so heavily about us.

"What was that?" I exclaimed involuntarily, more to myself than to my companion.

"What be yer afeard on?" muttered he stolidly. "'T was only a moor-hen."

"I—I didn't know," I stammered, with a beating heart, and sank into silence again.

Cold and miserable, I closed my eyes for a time, and by and by, on opening them, found that we had got on to a less rugged part of the ground, that trees were more thickly around us, and that the fog was not so clinging and low. Then we left the fens altogether, and once more jogged on to the turnpike. Having kept to the road for about ten minutes, we neared a dense grove of pine-trees. We entered the blackness of this plantation, and soon arrived at a gate in the roadside. There was no lodge, and the gate was open. We turned in at it, and then the sound of the wheels became almost muffled, for the earth over which the cart was now passing was dead-leaf-strewed and moss-grown, hinting of a way that was seldom used, that was a stranger to the feet of man.

"I suppose this is the park?" I ventured to inquire of old Jakes.

"'Ees," was all the answer I got.

Within a few minutes after that we stopped before a large old-fashioned house, high and irregular, the starlit gray walls of which looked weather-stained and hoary, clothed in places with masses of ivy which

climbed to the gaunt gables and crooked chimney-stacks, and also clung fast to the crumbling stone-work of the shuttered windows. No light shone forth from those ancient lattices. A death-like stillness enwrapped the old mansion. I thought of that uncanny line of Thomas Hood's, —

"The place is haunted," —

and trembled from head to foot, — trembled and shivered as I had done more than once that night.

Hearing, doubtless, the grating of wheels on the moist gravel outside, somebody drew back the great house-door and appeared on the threshold of Walsing Hall. It was an old woman in a white cap and apron, holding a flaring light high above her head. I managed without any assistance to scramble down from my perilous seat, and tiredly mounted the shallow lichen-stained steps.

"Come along in," the old woman said, in a manner so like the voice and manner of that old sinner Jakes for surliness and ill-temper that I guessed at once that the two were fellow-servants. "Miss Burton, I s'pose?"

"Yes."

"This way, then."

She had fastened up the great door as quickly as she had opened it, and was conducting me through the inner hall, — a wide, oak-panelled, oak-floored, barn-like place, with a black-beamed, smoke-dried ceiling, and a cavernous hearth at the far end. There was no light about us, save that which the old woman herself carried, and it was with difficulty that I could discern upon the gloomy walls a tattered banner here and there, a rusty bit or two of once bright armor, huge and spreading antlers, or a murky life-sized portrait of some dead and gone Walsingham, of which the gilding of the massive frame had long since faded into dust and dinginess.

"Jakes — he's my husband — shall bring up your things," said the old servant stolidly, without turning her head, as she led the way up the grim-looking uncarpeted staircase, I wearily yet warily following. "They're all right: you need n't fidget. Now take care. Don't be for pitchin' head for'ard back'ards."

This somewhat bewildering caution was not altogether unnecessary: I had not been accustomed to so treacherous a footing.

Down long passages, gloomy and haunted-

looking, did we go, past many deep-set doors that looked as if they were never opened, and then up another stairway to the top of the house, before coming to the two small-gabled chambers which, I was told, were mine. The little attic bedroom and dressing-closet which had been prepared for me were, I could see at a glance, scantily but neatly garnished with odds and ends of old-fashioned, spindle-legged furniture, and scraps of moth-eaten, ancient-patterned chintz, which, apparently, had been dragged forth from some half-forgotten lumber-hole, and deemed quite good enough for the poor companion. Then, *a propos* of nothing in particular, Mrs. Jakes informed me that she was the housekeeper at Walsing Hall, and, as the mistress was abroad that night, that there was no "call" for me to go down again, — "I might take my snack o' supper up-stairs, if I liked;" a proposition to which I gladly acceded.

"I presume," said I, with a tired yawn, "Lady Walsingham will require me to read prayers for her, will she not, the first thing in the morning?"

Mrs. Jakes, her horny old hand upon the bedroom door, about to descend, interrupted me with a hard, crackling laugh.

"Prayers!" cried she. "Prayers here, did you say? O stars alive! that 'ud be somethin' fresh, that 'ud! No, no: you need n't go frettin' yourself about that. Dear, dear!" muttering to herself, as she went off, "what a hinnercent the gal is, to be sure!"

Half an hour later I had finished my "snack o' supper," and was in bed, having thrown, almost unconsciously, my whole soul into my own simple prayers, especially into those few words, "Deliver us from evil."

"Cart-ropes shouldn't drag me to Walsing Hall," had said the landlady of the wayside inn, "to go and live with a witch!" And now, with horrid clearness, the perhaps senseless speech came back to my memory, beating itself into my restless brain with dull, persistent force.

Oh, what had not Madame Roche done in sending me to a house that was under a ban, — a home shrouded in gloom and mystery, — and, beyond all doubt, with dark tales tacked on to it that must be told with bated breath?

Sorely troubled in mind, I at last fell asleep.

CHAPTER II.

Uncalled, I awoke next morning, dressed, and found my way down-stairs. Having reached, however, the bottom of the staircase, I knew not whither to turn. As I stood there irresolute, gazing rather vacantly at the tattered and dusty banners hanging just above my head, a door almost close to me creaked slowly on its hinges, and I—*looking about me somewhat apprehensively*, I fear—confronted my new and dreaded mistress, Lady Walsingham. I knew that it was she; and this is the picture I then beheld,—I remember it vividly, as if it were only a scene of yesterday.

A tall, upright, and singularly spare old lady, and somehow looking, too, a dame of high degree, every inch of her; in years verging on sixty,—perhaps over. Her features were fine and aquiline, her eyes as black as sloes; but her face and hands were shriveled, yellow, and like wax. She wore a long black gown, plain, scant, and lustreless, relieved at the cuffs and rather low-cut neck with folds of snowy cambric. Her hair matched her linen for whiteness, and was crowned by a tall mob-cap. She came toward me and held out three yellow fingers. Her hand was quite dry and cold, and felt like the hand of a corpse.

"I am rejoiced to see you, Miss Burton," she said, speaking as I followed her into the room she had come out of. "I would not allow you to be disturbed this morning," she went on, "as I imagined you would be glad of a long rest. But please recollect, for the future, that I breakfast at half-past eight—it is now a quarter-past nine."

Lady Walsingham, with dignity, waved me to a seat at the breakfast-table. Feeling snubbed and nervous, I sat down humbly. She seated herself opposite me, and began to pour out the tea.

"When you become a little more used to me and my ways," she said then—but no smile was upon her colorless lips, no kindly light in her sloe-black eyes—and I may here record that, during the whole time of my sojourn at Wasing Hall, never once did Lady Walsingham think fit to smile on me—never once did she encourage me with a tender or friendly word. That there was no tenderness about her I was not long in finding out; no tenderness, no heart, no religion. Her creed was one of mystery, her soul unfathomable. I have no pleasant re-

collections whatever of Lady Walsingham individually. "When you become a little more used to me and my ways, this office of tea-making will be yours," she said. "I am sick of living alone and waiting upon myself."

She did not say this complainingly; on the contrary, the words were uttered sharply, almost fiercely. I murmured something unintelligible, knowing not how to reply, and bent my head low over my cup.

"And yet understand, Miss Burton," she continued proudly, "it is wholly of my own choice that I live here alone. Quiet and seclusion are necessary to the one great scheme of my life. There is a grand secret ahead of me which I am determined to overtake and to unriddle. When that unriddling shall have been accomplished—ah! then indeed existence will be one entrancing, one cloudless delight! There shall be—I speak for myself—no more doubt, no more fear, no more shadows and darkness, no more pain. A brief time hence I may have won back my sweet, lost youth. Who knows?"

When other folk—yourself amongst the number, Miss Burton—shall have long since been mouldering in their graves, crumbled away, lost forever, gone, I shall still be left, once more young and beautiful, I trust, as I was in the days gone by."

Again I murmured something—I know not what—and glanced hurriedly at Lady Walsingham, who was not looking toward me now. Her eyes were lowered in gloomy revery; my insignificant presence seemed forgotten. Was she mad? I wondered, with a chilly sensation about my heart. Was she dangerous? Oh, how long would Madame Roche expect me to remain at Wasing Hall, when she should come to know that I went about in peril,—in chill and deadly fear?

Presently I summoned up courage to look about the room.

It was a small apartment, that wherein we were, oak-paneled throughout, like all the rest of the Hall. It was situated at the back of the house, and looked out upon the bare, neglected gardens and melancholy wilderness of a park; the furniture was antique and heavy, the mantel high and inaccessible. Another room opened out of it, the door of which was ajar.

Breakfast at an end, I was taken into this other room, which I was amazed to find so very much more spacious than the one we had just quitted,—more spacious by far,

and infinitely more gloomy, with the same description of massive wainscot, more of the same lumbering, crooked-legged furniture, and with the same depressing view from the two deep-set old-fashioned windows. That end of the room which faced the door was lined with book-shelves from ceiling to oak-
en floor.

I soon learned that these two cheerless apartments at the back of the house were all that my strange mistress ever used downstairs. The great reception-rooms in the front and on the western side of Walsingham Hall—as indeed were the chambers above them—were every one of them shut up and but rarely entered; their Tudor windows were always barred and shuttered as I had seen them on the night of my arrival; and fires were seldom or never lighted within them to drive away the noxious damp.

Of young domestics at Walsingham Hall there were none, and had not been for years; for they would not live there. Jakes, Mrs. Jakes, and an old coachman, all three of whom had known the mistress in her more youthful days, together made up the staff of the servants' hall.

I soon learned, too, that the duties expected of me would not, on the whole, be very arduous ones. The morning and afternoon must be devoted to Lady Walsingham: the evening, after five o'clock or so, was my own, to do as I liked with.

No,—my duties were not exactly heavy; but, at the same time, they were somewhat peculiar. The language of the books which I was compelled to read aloud I could not in the least comprehend: indeed it was with difficulty that I read them at all. But then, if the reading was tough enough, the writing, the transcribing, which fell to my lot was verily a thousand times worse. Huge volumes were dragged down from those musty book-shelves,—tomes chemical, alchemical, astrological, mythological,—and placed before me, sometimes, either to read or copy from, according to the order of the day, until my head has ached and my brain whirled, and impish hieroglyphs have danced madly before my eyes. My dreams were haunted by folios of Egyptian magic; there were times when I felt so bewildered that I wondered whether I was bewitched. Nothing that I read, nothing that I wrote, could I understand: my tongue and my hand alike moved in the dark, as it were, deep down in the mazes of mystery.

"You see," said Lady Walsingham that first morning, as I sat at a small table in the embrasure of one of the oriel windows, laboriously tracing on the paper under my hand the mysterious characters of the page before me, laboriously "tackling" my first lesson in necromancy, whilst her ladyship with clouded brow stood before the fire and held out her wax-like fingers to the crackling pine-logs on the hearth, "I am old now, am fast getting older every day; but that is a misery of the present only. There will be a change soon: there must be. Things will be altered strangely for me: the stars themselves have willed it so. But I am getting old, as I was saying, like everybody else, and my hand shakes, and my eyes fall and play me false, and that is why I was forced, in the first place, to bring myself to the idea of looking out for some one to help me. There is so much to be done, such a little time to do it in; so much to learn before the end can be attained. You do not understand the secret, of course; you never will; it is not necessary that you should. But you will not, I am sure, vex me by wasting time—for time is precious—in dawdling over the tasks I set you—you would not be here if I were able to do them myself, recollect—when I tell you, Miss Burton, that I am employing my cunning against the ruthlessness of mortality; am fighting a fight in which I hope to come off victorious. That most wise man, Doctor Sable, my only friend"—

I interrupted her weird, rambling talk by starting, and looking up from my work, the wise man's name struck me so unpleasantly.

"Doctor Sable?" I cried involuntarily.

"Doctor Sable, my only friend," went on Lady Walsingham, noticing the interruption merely by a frown, "says himself that my chances are very favorable now; and I have implicit faith, the utmost confidence, in his predictions. It was Doctor Sable whom I went to see last night. Otherwise I should have sent the carriage for you. Come, girl,—don't sit there staring at me; but remember what I told you just now, and waste no time."

Cowed, without another word I returned to my hieroglyphs; and my mistress seated herself at a distant table, with a large dog-eared volume spread out before her.

So the morning wore on. Out-of-doors the firs were tossing aloft their moaning branches in the gray bleakness of the early

spring day; the hurrying clouds were leaden and low; great blots of rain were now and then splashed on the panes. Suddenly my window was darkened, and I lifted my head quickly. A man was standing outside and peering into the room.

I had just time to note that he was an elderly-looking man, dressed in dark close-fitting clothes and a shovel-hat, of an evil countenance, with a strange smile upon it, when he stretched forth a long, claw-like hand, and tapped once, twice, thrice on the glass. Both Lady Walsingham and I had risen from our seats.

"Child," she said sharply, "leave the room. Go away somewhere. It is Dr. Sable."

I gladly accepted the dismissal, and made for my own room. Scrambling up the oak stairs as fast as my legs could take me, I met Mrs. Jakes coming leisurely down them.

"Mrs. Jakes," I panted, "how on earth did he get here? He came to the window—Who is he?"

"Be yer daft?" said Mrs. Jakes sulkily. "What do yer mean?"

"I—I mean Dr. Sable."

"Oh, it's him, is it? Dr. Satan we calls him,—and that's nigher the mark, I'll warrant, if the truth could be known. Why, he's allus here, croppin' up in one place or t' other, and sometimes yer runs agen him, and sometimes yer don't, just as it happens; but anyhow you must get used t' un, as we've had to do, if you stops here. Bless the gal, you maunt go lookin' like a ghost for nothin'! He don't want you, I'll be bound."

And with this scant comfort she moved on and left me.

That night, high up in my attic quarters, rocked by the wind that rushed round and above the old house, that swept over the lonely fens and shrieked and sobbed amongst the tall swaying fir-tops, I wrote to Madame Roche, and tried to tell her, clearly and dispassionately, what my new home was like, and begged her earnestly to write to me and advise me what to do. And Madame did write back, and said "Bah!" in her long brisk letter about half a dozen times, winding up in a postscript with "Don't be a little idiot!"

And so, since Madame Roche, whom I had ever looked upon as a modern Minerva, had, in her wisdom, said "Bah!" so em-

phatically, I must perforce grow resigned to my untoward fate, and accept it, if possible, without more ado.

CHAPTER III.

It was Sunday, and I had been a sojourner at Walsing Hall just a fortnight and three days. I was going to church that afternoon for the first time since my coming into the neighborhood. I had much wanted to go to the morning service, but my mistress told me that I could not be spared. The two Sundays before I had not gone either, on account of boisterous weather, and the whole of one sabbath had been frittered away in studying magic with my wicked Lady Walsingham.

With a feeling akin to despair, with a heart as heavy as lead, I had settled down, with what outer grace and courage I could muster, to the monotony of my new and sombre life. Resigned, in the real sense of the word, I never would, never could grow, though Madame Roche was unkind enough to declare that my fear and nervousness were "all fudge." Nobody visited at Walsing Hall,—nobody save that mysterious personage Dr. Sable,—for the place had acquired a most evil name, and was shunned by rich and poor alike. It is true Mr. Carr had called once,—the Rev. Herbert Carr, the young Vicar of Walsing, to whose church I was going this afternoon,—and that unexpected visit of his was a red-letter day in my calendar. His brave, handsome face was the one welcome sight I had seen since leaving Madame and Northumberland Lodge; his kind and genial voice was the one welcome sound I had heard since crossing the drear threshold of Walsing Hall. I was feeling almost happy at the thought of seeing him again; for, like the good man he was, he had taken notice of me, had compassionated my pitiful loneliness, and had spoken very gently and considerately to me during that one too brief half-hour; and his goodness had quite touched my lonely heart.

As for Dr. Sable, he was, in the language of Mrs. Jakes, forever cropping up where one least expected to meet him. Apparently he had been granted the full run of the Hall, for one seldom saw the comings or the goings of the man,—and yet he was with us continually, haunting the place like a shadow. Sometimes one met him in the

old oak hall, where the rusty bits of armor and tattered flags,

"That with the opened door,
Seemed the old wave of battle to remember,"

rattled and shivered against the draughty wall; and sometimes one came upon him on the shadowy staircase, noiselessly stealing either up or down, like some loathsome reptile, I used to think, shudderingly. Lady Walsingham's laboratory — at least the room she called her laboratory — was upstairs, though I was never allowed to enter it myself; nor indeed was any one else, save Dr. Sable.

Occasionally he arrived on a bony black horse, that seemed to know its way about the neglected grounds of Walsing Hall just as well as did its ugly master. Whensoever we chanced to encounter each other, he never spoke, nor did I. His lean, dark, close-clad shape used to flit past me in the gloom as nimbly as a sprite might have done; his long, claw-like hands were seldom free either of book or manuscript, vial or casket. There was generally a ghoulish leer upon his hideous leathery face.

Nobody knew where Dr. Sable lived, whence he used to come, whither he used to go. On the nights when Lady Walsingham drove out in her carriage across the low-lying flats and dismal marshes, to visit and consult him in his own abode, as it was rumored, she always alighted at a lonely part of the road, and always too at the same spot, there bidding the old coachman to wait for her return. But neither he nor any other curious one had ever screwed up the courage necessary to track the mistress in order to find out whither she really went, and what were her actual pranks on these secret, dark night errands. Did not the whole country-side know perfectly well that Lady Walsingham was a witch outright, who could straddle a broom-stick and fly over hedges and ditches on a windy night with the best and foremost of her tribe; that Dr. Sable was no other than the Evil One himself in disguise — a disguise nevertheless it was but a simple matter to penetrate — and surely that was enough? Yes, doubtless it was the better part of valor and wiser by far to leave the pair alone in their wickedness, to hatch unmolested together the godless devices of their hearts.

I could hear the bells ringing on the still

afternoon air, — it was but a half-mile walk across the park to Walsing church. Lady Walsingham was in her laboratory; and so, having dressed, I went to the door and tapped at it.

"Yes," said her voice from within.

"I am just going, Lady Walsingham. I am come to let you know."

"Very well; then go. But don't loiter on your way home, as I shall want you to read to me by and by."

I hastened out into the clear, bright sunshine, glad to be quit of the dusk and shadows. April was come now, and the earth was growing fairer every day. The occasional showers were nourishing the grass, drawing out the tender buds and leaves, wooing the sweet, shy wild-flowers into life and loveliness again. The lark sang high in the heavens, a tiny speck against a sea of blue. Only the pines, which shut in the gloomy house, remained sombre and sad beneath the gracious spell of this sweet spring weather.

When I entered the quiet little church, there was much nudging amongst the villagers already assembled, — much nudging, staring, whispering. I was a phenomenon to them all, and must be treated accordingly. I was companion to the witch, — perhaps was a witch myself. Doubt, horror, wonderment, were on the many stolid faces around me. They stared so hard, so persistently at last, that I began to think they must mean lying in wait for me as I went home, to catch me, to duck me, in all probability, in one of those deep pools on the fens, in order to ascertain whether I should swim mortal-like, or sink witch-fashion to the bottom. I grew cold and fearful at the thought. I bowed my head low in the old-fashioned pew.

That quiet afternoon service was something of an ordeal, I must own; and yet I was truly sorry when it came to an end. I lingered until almost the last, then plucked up courage and sallied forth, — my books in my hand, — looking neither to the right nor to the left. I hurried out at the churchyard gate, over which the ragged yews spread their branches shelteringly, and through the knots of dawdlers that I knew would be waiting there.

"Lookee, she carries the Prayer-book!" cried one man. "Hie thee, witch!"

"'T was she," said another, "or that darned old missus of hers, that pulled our

poor little Sally down so low with the fever, I'd swear! Out on 't, thou hussy o' Satan, and gibber thy prayers at home!"

"Say 'ein back'ards, and save your soul!" laughed a third, a woman, snatching her child hastily aside as I passed, lest my skirt should touch and harm the little one, who immediately cried at the top of its small voice, —

"Is that a witch, mammy? Let me throw a stone at her!"

Then it was that I took to my heels, and ran ignominiously down the road, along by the gray stone wall of the Vicarage garden, and once more into the park of Walsingham, which luckily was close at hand. Safe beneath the shelter of the sturdy old trees there, I sat down tiredly upon a barren mole-turned hillock, and wept out my misery in a passion of tears. It was soon over, however, and I began to dry my eyes. Then I looked up quickly, to see Mr. Carr standing over me, his own beautiful eyes full of sympathy, the sunlight in his short brown beard. I sprang to my feet in a moment.

"I am very foolish," was all I could say. "I—I—"

"Not foolish," he corrected gently, as he took my hand in his; "but frightened, beyond a doubt. I have spoken to those people, and have reproved them severely. I do not think they will dare to annoy you again. On next Sunday you must call for my mother; with her you will be quite safe."

I thanked him earnestly, the grateful tears in my voice.

"They mistook me for a witch," I said, trying to smile. "I live at Walsingham Hall, you see."

"You must not mind, Miss Burton, — try not to do so, at any rate," he said gravely. "Some of them about here are lamentably ignorant, and must be judged accordingly. I assure you, when I first came to Walsingham, two years ago, I was shocked to find how strongly superstition and ignorance were rooted in the minds of my poor parishioners. But I have done my best with them," he added, with a sigh, "and must hope to accomplish still more."

Then we found ourselves walking leisurely homeward — to Walsingham Hall, I mean — with the genial sun before us sinking gradually in the western sky, the blithe piping of the woodland birds all around us in the young green branches of the trees. I did

not feel a bit nervous now; somehow this man's presence seemed an all-sustaining comfort to me. My fear was allayed, my soul calmed. Near him I was happy and at rest.

"Mr. Carr," I said presently, "I wish you would tell me something of Lady Walsingham. Will you? Though I have been at Walsingham Hall nearly three weeks, I know next to nothing about her. I am quite in the dark, believe me."

I glanced up timidly at him; his face was graver than usual, — almost stern.

"And I know only what I have been told," he said, "and that is not much. Nor can I vouch for the truth of it. One scarcely knows what to believe sometimes. The world is full of lies."

"Do enlighten me," I pleaded; and as I spoke a rabbit started up from under my feet nearly, scudded fearlessly ahead of us, and then vanished down a sandy-mouthed burrow just a few yards farther on, where the fern and bramble and tangled underwood were growing luxuriantly together.

"Enlighten you?" Mr. Carr answered, with his grave sweet smile. "I will do my best. It seems that Lady Walsingham," he continued, "was left a widow at twenty years of age, or thereabouts; a most beautiful widow, they say; childless, friendless, and burthened heavily with a bad husband's debts. She deserted the Hall suddenly, and went away nobody knows whither, — though it is thought that she has traveled half over the world — was lost sight of, in fact, until she was almost forgotten. She came of an eccentric family, so perhaps there is some excuse for her inexplicable behaviour and for the vagaries that so scandalize her neighbors. Well, after long years she re-appeared, returning to Walsingham Hall gray, haggard, and old, her beauty gone, her past a mystery. The servants whom she had left young and healthful in charge of the house she found grown ancient and withered like herself. Change and death had been at work in her long absence; she barely recognized the once familiar scene, the neighborhood in which she had been born and bred. No sooner was she home than she began the life of a recluse; would see no one, know no one, — never going abroad in the daylight, never attending church. Of course evil tales have got about, causing the old mansion to be shunned by everybody. Some believe its

aged *châtelaine* to be an astrologer, others a magician. For my own part"—

"Yes, and you?" I interrupted eagerly.

"Well, I look upon her, Miss Burton, as a harmless old madwoman," he said.

"Ah," cried I, shuddering and drawing a heavy breath, "I thought it! I am not surprised. You have realized my worst fears, that's all. I knew all along that she must be downright crazy!"

"Don't be alarmed, my child," he hastened to add re-assuringly. "There is method, or rather, I should say, obstinacy, in her madness. I believe from the bottom of my heart that she knows what is right, but follows willfully that which is wrong."

"I don't understand you," I said slowly. "All that I can tell you is that she is forever harping on one theme,—the days that are gone, and how to get them back again. She says she is discovering the secret of eternal youth."

"Lady Walsingham, though it is hardly Christianlike in me to say so, is a wicked old dreamer," Mr. Carr remarked sternly; "and the evil now, I fear, is irremediable. Years ago perhaps, if she had been roused—But there, I don't know,"—shrugging his shoulders; "after all, she is a riddle beyond my comprehension."

After a moment or two of silence, I ventured,—

"You said that no one ever called at Walsing Hall. Why, you yourself have been there, Mr. Carr."

"Ah, I am a clergyman, you see!" he answered quietly.

"Then why don't you make her go to church?" I bluntly asked him.

"Do you not recollect the old proverb," he said, looking down at me somewhat quizzically, "which tells us that one man can lead a horse to the trough, but twenty—You know the rest?"

"Yes, I know the rest," I laughed.

"As I hinted to you just now, it is my firm conviction that Lady Walsingham's eccentricity is equalled only by her bigotry and waywardness. She refuses to be reasoned with; and what can one do?"

A thrush commenced warbling in a Bramble near; the lowing of cows going slowly home across the fens to be milked came to us, sweet, faint, and plaintive, borne upon the fresh spring wind.

"And then, too, there is Dr. Sable," said I anxiously. "Who, pray, is Dr. Sable?"

Mr. Carr looked troubled, I fancied; he answered me quickly.

"Why ask me, Miss Burton! I cannot tell you. He is a man of whom I do not know or wish to know anything. They tell me that he appeared about the place soon after Lady Walsingham's return; and it is generally supposed that she first met with him somewhere abroad. Who he is, what he may be, is another unpleasant mystery. We will not talk about him."

"He haunts us," said I wearily, not heeding my companion. "He is a greater riddle even than Lady Walsingham herself. Nobody knows where he comes from; nobody knows where he goes to. And—and—Mr. Carr," the tears starting to my eyes again, "such ugly tales are whispered of him,—tales that make one's very flesh creep. They say"—

"Come, hush!" said this new and most welcome friend of mine cheerily. "Let's dismiss the rogue; he is not worth a second thought, Miss Burton. See, here is the garden gate already; and our pleasant walk is at an end."

Yes, like all sweet and gracious things, it had too quickly come to an end, that slow, short walk of ours across the neglected park. The gray old gabled house with its shuttered windows and smokeless chimneys was in sight; we could hear the ravens croaking in the clustering ivy upon the roof. We halted. I sighed involuntarily.

"My lines have never fallen in very pleasant places," I said then, with a discontented glance toward my mistress's abode. "They are worse than ever now."

"Child, child," Mr. Carr said gently, "don't complain, but try with your whole heart to be patient. Patience pays best in the long run."

In shaking hands I somehow or other dropped my church-service,—the heavy, cumbersome, puritan-like present which Madame Roche had seen fit to give me on my seventeenth birthday. The first leaf, showing my own name in Madame's gaunt, legible writing, fell out of the book and fluttered, the written name upwards, to Mr. Carr's feet. He picked up the church-service, and replaced the loose leaf.

"Janet," he said, in his gentle, earnest way, as he returned the book to my keeping; "a pretty name. Is it yours, Miss Burton?"

"Thank you—yes," I stammered, grow-

ing as red as a rose. "I am glad you like it. It is not as ugly as some I know—I mean—it is cruel, I think, to give one a horrid name before one is old enough to have any voice in the matter. We should be allowed to choose for ourselves, should we not? Good-by."

With a genial nod he lifted his hat, and then and there we separated. A blazing midsummer poppy, I fancy, would have looked pale and wan contrasted with my cheeks at that moment.

I watched him furtively till he was out of sight, and then, with a strange heart-sickness weighing most heavily upon me, went indoors.

"He told me not to complain," I muttered to myself. "He said it was best to be patient. Ah, how easy it is," soliloquized I rather bitterly, "for the fortunate ones to preach to their less fortunate brethren! Good advice costs nothing."

Mounting the shadow-wrapped stairs, more gloomy than ever at sunset-time, my nostrils were assailed by a strong sulphurous odor. As I neared the door of Lady Walsingham's laboratory the smell became more powerful, more obnoxious,—the corridor was full of it. Coughing and sneezing, I guessed at once that my mistress was at her old practices, experimenting with her herbs and poisons, and Heaven alone knew what besides. Just as I reached the laboratory door it was opened cautiously, letting out a gray flood of suffocating vapor, and Dr. Sable stood on the threshold, his narrow eyes glinting like flame itself, his leathery face all fendish and aglow from a red light which was burning in the room behind him,—burning in a kind of censer, it seemed to me. Beyond this I saw nothing, for there was no time. In an instant the door was shut by an unseen hand, and in an instant too the lean, wiry figure of Dr. Sable, savoring unmistakably of brimstone, had slid past me in the gloom and was lost to view. As for myself, I fled in the opposite direction, never pausing to draw breath or to rest my shaking limbs until the haven of my own chamber was gained and secured.

"It—it must be the Evil One," I panted in an awe-struck, terrified whisper, "or, if not he, something belonging to him!" And then, my fear and perplexity overwhelming me quite, I laughed aloud hysterically. But the mad mirth was of short duration,

inasmuch as the next moment I fell to copious weeping for the second time that Sabbath afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

Looking back sometimes to the shadowed days of the past, I wonder dreamily whether it could possibly have been myself who lived through them, uncheered, and almost friendless, in that lonely old house by the fens. And yet, looking back from a better time, I know now that life even then was not all darkness, that sweet glimpses of sunshine used to come,—and, alas, go!—always most welcome and dearly prized, though, because they were so rare. I do not suppose there is any life so terribly sad and lonely as to be wholly destitute of occasional joy.

The spring was gone; the summer-time, with its fair gay loveliness, had followed in the wake of spring; autumn, with moaning winds and saddened falling leaves, was making sad the whole face of nature in change and decay. Great mists all day brooded over the marshes; the dikes were veiled, the pollards gaunt and bare. At night strange noises came up from the stagnant pools, where the sedge, the rushes, and the trailing water-reeds were lying brown and dead; and, when the day dawned again, the air was still raw and moist, with the leaden sky and the sad dead earth so near together that in the misty distance they seemed to touch each other and to blend imperceptibly into one vast sea of chilly gray. It was the inevitable season of the sere and yellow leaf, when the heart grows heavy in spite of itself, and when weary eyes are apt to take a deeper weariness at the thought of the looming future. Ah, may not the great lesson of mortality indeed be learned from the fallen leaves?

More than six months had elapsed since I had first set foot within Walsing Hall, but not once as yet had I been home to Madame Roche at Notting Hill. I had been bold enough to hint at a holiday, it is true, when the bright summer weather was with us, and my soul sickening for a glimpse of the old schoolroom faces; but my mistress had soon settled all hope upon that point. She could not spare me, she said gloomily; life, as it was then, was all too brief for holidays. At Christmas? Well, perhaps at Christmas, if she were feeling tolerably young and hope-

ful, and the stars were favorable. Otherwise, she could not promise.

So day after day went by and saw me still at the same uncongenial work, listening to the same incoherent talk, trying to be brave and patient, and not rebellious, yet wondering vaguely—and somewhat recklessly, I fear—down in my inmost heart whether it was not compromising my own soul to be living thus wittingly with a suspected witch, and doing a suspected witch's bidding. I was seldom allowed to walk beyond the park; nor, except for one reason, did I dare to do so. It was no joke to be jeered at as an unclean spirit; to be pointed at, mouthed at, as a daughter of Astaroth. My only friends were Mr. Carr and his mother, and them I rarely saw; for Lady Walsingham hated the notion of my attending the village church, and would always do her best to prevent my going thither, inventing all kinds of wicked devices in order to keep me at home with her. However, when I could get away to the Vicarage, it was like breathing the air of Eden, I used to think rapturously, after the duskiness and stuffiness of Walsing Hall. I had never appeared alone at church since that one memorable Sunday afternoon; if I went, I called for Mr. Carr's good mother, and, under her wing, I knew that I was safe from evil. I know too, now, that Walsing Hall would have seen more than it did of Mr. Carr, in those days, had it not been for his unconquerable repugnance to the idea of encountering Dr. Sable. He hated him—dislike is not the word—as much, as thoroughly, as I did myself.

How thankful used I to be when the day was done, and I could creep up unobserved, unheeded, to the seclusion of my own attic rooms, there to dream in undisturbed peace, or write grumbling letters to a school-fellow! If I wanted supper, Mrs. Jakes used to bring it up to me—protesting loudly, at my finicky ways—for, to tell the truth, nothing would have induced me to descend those old oak stairs after nightfall, for fear of encountering Dr. Sable in the dark. Frequently did I go to bed hungry and supperless when Mrs. Jakes's ill-humor was keener than usual.

"Is he here tonight, Mrs. Jakes?" I often said to the housekeeper, as she put down the tray on my small dressing-room table. She never failed to understand me.

"Here again?" she would answer, with a

grunt. "Why, you may take yer oath o' that o' course! The place stinks on 'im, I tell yer. Outside, in this 'ere passage, there's enough brimstone to choke the whole kit of us. They be a-mutterin' an' a-burnin' an' a-cussin' an' a-swearin' at each other, for aught I know, down in that room o' theirs, like—like saints alive, oh!" said Mrs. Jakes, somewhat at a loss for a forcible comparison, invariably winding up with, "There! Heaven only knows what 'll become of us all, for I don't. I just hopes Providence 'll take care o' me and Jakes, and t' other folks must look to theirselves!"

Sometimes I have lain awake in the dense, drear blackness of a windy night, nights that seemed made expressly for witches and broom-straddling, and have listened to such unearthly sounds and stealthy footfalls creaking through the deserted corridors and locked-up chambers of Walsing Hall that my poor heart has scarcely beat in its chill agony of fear and doubt, and cold sweat has bathed me from head to foot. Then ghastly legends of haunted houses, long-forgotten tales of blood and murder, horrible stories of walking ghosts seeking the rest they could never find, would crowd thick and fast to my weirdly active memory as I lay and listened to the voices in the wind, and waited for those other sounds which had no name, which came only when the shrieking wind was lulled. Oh, how earnestly I used to pray for protection at such times, and for the blessed, blessed dawn that was always so long in coming!

At last this unnatural kind of life, which was slowly yet surely wearing me out, drew to an end. At last peace unutterable was suddenly awarded me as a crown for my much-tried endurance.

One evening early in November—I can recall it as if it were but yesterday—a boisterous evening which had followed a stormy sunset, under the lurid banks of cloud and gleams of dying light of which the mists on the fens had taken a blood-red tinge—Lady Walsingham was showing herself stranger than usual. She was restless too, and kept pacing unweariedly the wainscoted room we were sitting in. I can see her now, as she looked that night, dressed in her customary black trailing gown, with the fine white cambric at her neck and wrists, and the high mob-cap upon her snow-white hair. How truly black and terrible seemed her dark eyes in the firelight, how yellow her

shriveled waxen skin! She looked like Lady Macbeth grown old, still brooding on the sins of a haunting past. To and fro she went with a noiseless tread, sometimes in the light and sometimes in the shadow, heeding me not as I crouched by the great oaken mantel, intent upon things of gloom and thoughts beyond my philosophy.

It was about the hour when I generally left her, so I rose quietly from the ancient hearth and prepared to steal away. Seeing me move, my mistress stopped abruptly.

"Where are you going?" she inquired sharply.

"To—to my room, Lady Walsingham," I answered, flurried.

"Then look over the flats," she said, "and see whether you can discern Dr. Sable coming. He should have been here half an hour ago. I am impatient, anxious for his arrival. Do you here me?"—stamping her foot. "There is a moon, or ought to be. Go and see, I repeat, and then come back and tell me."

With a heart that somehow or other strangely misgave me, I departed on the errand. I reached my chamber, and pulled aside the curtain. No; the marshes in the neighborhood of the house just over the firs were as deserted as they usually were; not a creature was visible, either man or beast, and beyond the fog was so thick and gray that the landscape was quite shrouded. The pale, dissipated-looking moon, on her back, had struggled through the scudding clouds, and was now leering down upon the troubled earth with her wannest, sickliest smile. The tall eight-day clock which stood in the gloom on the first corridor struck six as I descended.

"No," I said, entering the room, "there is nobody coming. Lady Walsingham."

"You are wrong," she cried peevishly; "there must be. Go and look again."

Hazy recollections of Sister Anne in the nursery story of "Bluebeard" flitted across my mind, and I wondered tiredly how many times Lady Walsingham would perhaps think fit to send me to the top of the house to look for the coming of Dr. Sable.

"My looking over the flats is really of no use," I contended uneasily. "The mists are deepening so rapidly"—

"Ah!" she interrupted, frowning, "I had forgotten! We will go out together then, and meet him. Come!"

I drew back in terror.

"Oh, no, no, Lady Walsingham!" I said. "I—I"—

My mistress seized my hand in her cold, corpse-like grasp, her colorless lips apart, her black eyes fierce and wide.

"Little wretch! Little fool!" she cried passionately. "What are you afraid of? Come with me this instant, or, as I live, you shall regret the disobedience!"

I was sick with alarm, but lacked the strength to show further resistance.

"Let me get a shawl first, or—or something," I faltered, shivering miserably; "the wind blows so coldly, Lady Walsingham, and—and"—

"The wind won't hurt you," she said scornfully; "a breeze will do you good. You're hardy enough, I know."

I longed to ask her why she could not sally forth alone to meet the man whom she called her only friend. Had a great nervousness, a presentiment of on-coming evil, seized her too on this night? I wondered almost curiously. Had she grown to fear Dr. Sable, to distrust him, and dread his stealthy approach?

Still clutching my hand, Lady Walsingham hurried me out-of-doors, the wind chilling our bodies through and through, our feet slipping widely on the moist dead leaves. All around us the pines were sobbing and plaining like living mourning souls; above us the heavy white-tipped clouds still raced athwart the moon's wan face.

"Do you see him anywhere?" asked my mistress breathlessly, with those awful black eyes of hers peering into the darkness round about. "Tell me if you do. For tonight," she went on rapidly, "he foretold great things, promising much if only the stars were out to help us. Do you see any shining yet? It all depends upon the stars; the secret of Eternal Youth is hidden amongst the constellations. It requires but patience, and the knowledge to study them aright, in order to get at that most wonderful riddle and to turn it to vast account. Can you see the stars?" she asked shrilly, grasping my fingers to positive pain. "I cannot myself. Look!"

So I raised my frightened eyes to the windy sky, to the patches of rich deep purple where the hurrying clouds were not. Here and there a little gem twinkled faintly, but that was all. I told Lady Walsingham.

"There are more," she contradicted harshly, with something like a sob, "only

you won't see them, — that is it. You are as obstinate as a mule, and as cowardly as most women. You pale-faced little wretch! what are you lagging for? How dare you be so troublesome? How dare you exasperate me so?"

Onward she dragged me over the moist earth, until the old gate at the end of the avenue came dimly into sight. As we neared the gate, a bleak gust, sweeping wildly up from the windy flats, suddenly tore off her high mob-cap, and carried it swiftly away into the moaning darkness behind us, thus leaving her white locks bared to the keen night air of November. Nevertheless she recked not, albeit she looked more witch-like than ever, now that her scant and wind-tossed hair was beginning to fall about her shriveled yellow face.

"Hush!" said my mistress sternly. "I hear a step!"

We had reached the gate, and were standing stock-still. Yes: the silence of the track across the fens was broken by an oncoming tread.

"It is Dr. Sable," said Lady Walsingham eagerly.

And I answered never a word.

As the lean, close-clad shape became distinguishable in the moon's uncertain light, the mistress of Walsingham Hall, passing noiselessly out of her fine plantation, met it halfway upon the road.

"Wait there," she called back to me in a low, peremptory tone. "Wait there till I return; and don't move!"

Those words were the last that I ever heard Lady Walsingham utter. Her hair was hanging about her shoulders, her terrible eyes shone exultantly. I saw her give her hand to Dr. Sable; I saw them speaking together, but could hear no word. Then they began to slowly walk away in the direction of the dreary fens, their figures growing more indistinct as the distance between us increased till at last the gloom and shadows of the troublous night closed round about them and I could see their forms no longer.

For a quarter of an hour or more I waited there, watching and shivering; but no Lady Walsingham appeared. For another quarter of an hour I watched and waited, but still she did not return. Then I called her name as loudly as my terror would permit, but the wanton night-wind blew my own voice back to me and mocked

my feeble cries. I strained my eyes to pierce the darkness, I wrung my hands as I waited; I even mounted the rickety spars of the gate the better to look across the shrouded flats. But, no: nowhere could I discern a sign of my lost mistress. She was gone, had disappeared, I knew not how or whither!

I watched and waited, in vain though, till great banks of clouds were rolled athwart the sky, swallowing up the moon, darkening the earth, and casting down big rain-drops upon my unprotected body; and then with a quick-formed resolution I turned from my post and fled from that old avenue gate as if for my very life.

Slipping right and left, just as I had done an hour before, I ran, retracing my steps along the rough, pine-girt avenue, but striking across the park when I neared Walsingham Hall, and turning my white face resolutely from the hateful place, standing there in the lowering night, with my eyes full of unspeakable dread. Presently, sliding heavily over the dank grass, I pitched head-foremost into a wet tangle of brier and underwood, rending my gown, scratching my hands and face, but soon, regaining my legs, tottering and uncertain though they were, resumed my flight with labored breath, until I fell exhausted, fainting, half dead, upon the threshold of Mr. Carr's home, — that home which henceforward was to be my own as well.

That night (but this, it should be understood, did not come to my knowledge till long afterward, when the fever, which prolonged and secret nervousness and exposure to the cold had engendered between them, was quite gone and myself out of danger; a burning sickness through which Mr. Carr and his mother, like the good Samaritans they indeed were, nursed and tended me with the most devoted care) Walsingham Hall was in flames. How the fire broke out nobody could exactly say; but Mrs. Jakes, who with her fellow-servants had somehow contrived to escape, declared sulkily that Lady Walsingham's laboratory was at the bottom of the mischief — that "summut or another set a-burnin' in there by the nasty hand of that Dr. Sable" was the cause of the old house being razed to the ground. Anyhow — and this Mrs. Jakes swore to — toward midnight Dr. Sable had been seen to quit the laboratory in his usual lynx-

like fashion, leaving that most mysterious chamber full of a red-hot glare, and then shortly after this the wild alarm was given, and the low-lying country lit up for twenty miles round, they said.

As for Lady Walsingham herself, she was never seen nor heard of again, either alive or dead, and, for that matter, neither was Dr. Sable; and whether she ever returned to Walsing Hall after bidding me wait for her at the avenue gate, and so perished in the fire, or whether she met her doom amidst the desolate fens and marshes near the house, was never ascertained by anybody.

It is true that the dreadfully ugly word "murder" was whispered abroad; but then, nobody quite knowing what steps to take in the affair, none consequently were taken. So her poor unmourned bones were never discovered, and her death remains to this day a mystery.

Herbert, my dear husband, and I often speak of that by-gone time when we first came to know each other at Walsing Hall, of Lady Walsingham, and of her unknown fate.

"As to that tale of witchcraft," says my sage John Anderson thoughtfully, "it is of course sheer nonsense. My belief, as you well know, is that Lady Walsingham was

mad to a certain extent, but infinitely more wicked than mad."

"And Dr. Sable, dear?" I put in skeptically, for somehow, unblushing heathen that I am, I never can quite rid my mind of the idea that my old mistress was a witch of some kind or other, and her lean-shaped confidant something a great deal worse. "How about Dr. Sable?"

"Oh, he," says my husband dubiously, "beyond a doubt, was an adventurer, —that is the conclusion I have come to; an adventurer who traded upon his victim's credulity, took mean advantage of her wild eccentricity, —in short, robbed her as long as he could! There, my dear little sweetheart, you have the key to the whole mystery."

"That 's all very well, dear," I say, with decision, "but how did she die in the end? Where did she go to that night, and what became of her, I should like to know?" Did she fly off to the Elysium of witches on a broom-stick, think you?"

This invariably silences my helpmate, and so the vexed question is dropped.

Those days of my youth which were spent at Walsing Hall were dark and drear enough, Heaven knows, and yet the light that dawned for me afterward compensated — nay, more than compensated — for the shadows and sorrows of the past.

WINTER.

BY MARY A. ALDEN.

"Winter is coming! Winter is coming!" cried little Alice, clapping her hands, as looked from the window she beheld the pretty snowflakes falling on a November day. "I'm so glad!"

"Glad that old cold winter's coming?" said Milly, shrugging her shoulders. "Why are you glad?"

Nevertheless, she put aside her book, and looked out at the sky filling faster and faster with the white whirl, almost blinding her eyes.

"The skating's spoiled," said Georgie somberly. "I hoped to skate Thanksgiving Day all day long."

"You would be too tired to dance then in the evening," said Milly.

"I should skate in the evening," said Georgie. "The grand time was to come in the evening. We had our bonfires ready on the edge of the ice, and our lanterns talked about, — and now this snow will come and spoil it all."

"Oh," said Alice, "I wish I was a boy, or old enough to go out on the ice in the evening, and see the bonfires."

"Sitting on the rug in front of the parlor fire, reading, and popping corn, is a great deal better fun," said Milly. "It frightens me, and I shiver, when I am out on the ice in the evening. Beside, I fell and bumped my head the last time I went. Do not you remember, Georgie?"

"Yes," said Georgie: "how frightened we were. I've bumped my head more than once; but I never felt as frightened as when you bumped yours."

"I remember," said Alice, "they brought you home in a sleigh. Why, it was good sleighing, and good skating too; perhaps it will snow, and make sleighing, and leave skating, too, before Thanksgiving."

"I wish you would go to the ball, Georgie, Alice and I are both going," said Milly. "And we are both going to wear our new plaids, the prettiest ones that we ever had."

"I shall see you at dinner-time," said Georgie, "and if skating is given up I shall go to the ball myself, and wear my new

striped stockings, and pink silk undersleeves."

This new article of clothing, purely imaginary, furnished a lively conversation, interrupted by the entrance of the children's parents, the drawing of the window shades, and the lighting of the evening lamp.

The flurry of snow passed; the next morning the sun was shining brightly. Indian Summer persisted in throwing its sunshine and warmth over Thanksgiving skies, and calling the skaters to their homes, where they surely ought to remain on that day of all others. Alice and Milly, in their bright plaids, danced with Georgie, looking so prettily that he forgave them their errors in the dance. After the ball they sat in front of the parlor fire, and talked over the gay event, then slept and woke to true winter days, which, despite their cold and dreariness, brought their thousand compensations. There was skating in the moonlight and firelight, and little Alice, venturing as a spectator with the others, fell and bumped her head, and ever afterward felt on an equality with Georgie and Milly. Milly, turning from the hearth-rug, overcame her fears, and loved to frequent the smooth shining pond that mirrored the stars and the night fires. Yet the night oftener found her early in bed, telling quaint stories to little Alice, and listening to hers in return.

Waking early in the morning, to tell their dreams, they peeped from under the blankets to see what Jack Frost had painted for them on the window-panes. Then followed the call to breakfast, the hasty dressing, the warm breakfast, the finishing of their toilet in mamma's warm room, the sleigh-ride to school, the slippery run home again, the evening games, and once more the stories under the woollen counterpane, with the frosty moonlight lighting their little chamber. Holidays, Christmas blessings, the glad New Year, — why, winter was nearly ended!

We have said nothing of cold toes, hard lessons, tiresome school-days, disappointments and sicknesses, yet all these were forgotten in the greater wealth of their enjoy-

ments. And every morning and evening they thanked *their heavenly Father* for his many benefits, and prayed that all other

children might have a home and happiness like theirs, forever sheltered from the winter storms.

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THE BATTLE FOR THE CEDARS. *

BY PRESLEY W. MORRIS.

[NO. 1.-- COMPLETE IN FOUR NUMBERS.]

CHAPTER I.

BARBARA.

There was a shriek from the locomotive, a harsh grating upon the rails, and then the train stopped.

"Burton," shouted a voice.

A young lady stepped off the train, on the platform, two or three trunks were thrown out from the baggage car, and, with another shriek, the locomotive was away again, dragging its burden after it. The young lady stood for a moment looking about her, and then she walked into the ticket office.

"Can you tell me how far it is from here to the residence of a gentleman by the name of De Vere?" she asked.

"The place is about half a mile distant," was the courteous reply of the ticket agent.

"Has Mr. De Vere been here this morning?"

"I have not seen him today," was the answer; "however, if he is expecting a visitor, as I take it for granted he must be, I do not doubt but that he will be here soon."

"He is expecting me," said the lady.

The agent was right in his prediction. There came the roll of carriage wheels outside, and soon a gentleman strode into the office.

"Miss Lindsley," he exclaimed.

"Mr. De Vere," she returned.

The two shook hands cordially.

"I am a little late," De Vere said; "still,

I have not kept you waiting long; but it was a little vexatious for you to find no one here."

"Not at all," Miss Lindsley said.

"You are ready?"

"Yes."

Mr. De Vere escorted Miss Lindsley to his carriage, and assisted her into it. "Drive on, Dick," he cried to the colored driver.

"I will send Dick down, with a cart, for your trunks," he said to Miss Lindsley, as he took a place beside her.

A hundred yards away, a river ran parallel with the railroad. A hard, level carriage-way stretched out to this from the depot. Then there was a long bridge. Beyond it, the road again, of course. Soon they had crossed the river.

It was a beautiful scene that was spread out to view. To the right and the left, the river wound away like a silver thread. Overhead there was a sky of unclouded blue. The wide valley was green and smiling. Orchard and field stretched away before them. Back of it all, great hills were outlined against the sky. And fragrance and sweetness were borne to the senses by the summer breeze.

"Victoria is well, of course," said Miss Lindsley as the carriage whirled along.

"Victoria is very well, indeed," Mr. De Vere answered.

"And little Minnie?"

"Yes."

There were other commonplaces. Pres-

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ently, the carriage stopped before some folding gates. The colored driver sprang from his seat, and swung them open. Then he drove up the avenue before the carriage, to a residence stylish and new.

"Here we are," cried Mr. De Vere.

He leaped to the ground, and assisted Miss Lindsley to alight. "Yonder comes that delightful sister of mine," he nodded.

A pretty young girl rushed out from the house, and embraced Miss Lindsley, with many exclamations of joy. Inside, the greetings ended, Miss Lindsley said, —

"Can I be shown to my room, Victoria? I am so tired, and so dirty and heated that I am ashamed to be seen."

"I will go with you, myself, to your room," said Victoria De Vere.

She led the way, Miss Lindsley following. Up a flight of stairs they went, and very shortly Victoria ushered her visitor into a pretty room, with green carpet, carved furniture, and picture-covered walls.

"Your bedroom opens out of this," Victoria said. "I have had these apartments furnished in a style that I thought would please you."

"Thank you for your forethought and kindness," Miss Lindsley returned. "The apartments are very beautiful."

And she kissed Victoria.

There was a great difference between these two young girls in personal appearance. Miss Lindsley was tall and queen-like, a brunette, bright and brilliant. She was very beautiful. There was a firm setting of the sweet red lips that told a story of self-reliance. Doubtless Miss Lindsley had had need of self-reliance. Any woman who marks out her own lot and position in life does.

But Victoria De Vere was a fairy-like little creature, with a *petite figure*. She was fair, with hair like spun gold. Her eyes were blue, and her lips scarlet. She was a merry, light-hearted, clinging piece of humanity. One would not say of her that she was beautiful, but that she was lovely.

After a few minutes' conversation, Victoria turned to go.

"At what hour do you dine?" Miss Lindsley called after her.

"At three," was the reply. "You will have plenty of time to rest, and to refresh yourself."

The De Vere mansion belonged to young

Robert De Vere. He possessed also quite a large estate of land, surrounding it. The land had been purchased, the residence constructed, with money that Robert had inherited from his father. In this connection it may be stated that both the parents of the young De Veres were dead. Victoria had as much money as Robert, but it was invested differently. She did not know how, "but Robert did." Robert had taken good care to invest it safely.

Robert was still unmarried, and Victoria, as well as another sister, much younger, and with a fortune of her own, too, resided with him; or perhaps it might be more correctly said that they were under his care.

It was two o'clock when Miss Lindsley descended the stairs, and entered the parlor. There was no one there, and she seated herself at the piano. She ran her hands over the keys, and the chords throbbed responsive to her touch. She played a plaintive piece, simple and tender and sweet: yet, though the piece was simple, it was evident that Miss Lindsley was more than an ordinary musician.

But she did not stop. A waltz followed, and then a difficult selection from an opera. Almost at the first, Robert De Vere had come to the door. He paused there, and listened. Presently Miss Lindsley ceased playing, and he walked to her side.

"Your playing is as matchless as ever," he said.

Miss Lindsley did not start, but turned with a smile; but before she could reply, Victoria De Vere appeared in the doorway.

"Little Min is very anxious to see you," she said to Miss Lindsley.

"Little Minnie?" cried Miss Lindsley gayly. "Why, I am equally anxious to behold her, the sweet child! Where is she?"

"In the family-room," Victoria replied. "The little witch has just been asleep, and her nurse is bathing her. I will have her brought in in a moment."

Victoria disappeared, but returned in a short time. She was leading a little girl by the hand, — a pretty creature, very much like herself.

The child released herself from Victoria's grasp, and ran to Miss Lindsley, who bent over her, and kissed her many times.

"Min glad to see Miss 'In'sey," she cried. "Min's a great notion to cry 'cause she's glad."

But Min did not cry. Miss Lindsley took

her in her lap, and played a schottische, gay and lively, for her.

"Perhaps you remember," she said, "that Min is as fond of my playing as — as" —

"Some other persons you could mention," interrupted Robert De Vere, with a laugh, as Miss Lindsley hesitated.

"I remember that when you were with us last summer," said Victoria, "her chief delight was to get you at the piano."

At that instant the summons to dinner sounded.

"Come," said Victoria. "I dare say you are quite hungry."

Robert escorted Miss Lindsley to the dining-room: Victoria took Minnie in charge. At dinner, the three young people, and the little child, sole occupants, save the servants, of the dining-hall, made a pleasant group.

"Do you like the country?" Miss Lindsley asked. "Doubtless you remember that this is the first time I have beheld any of you since you moved into this great, new house."

"To be sure we remember," Victoria answered. "We are very much pleased with the country; but we scarcely expect to remain here during the entire winter. About Christmas we will flee back to the city."

"After dinner I must have a glimpse at the scenery of your neighborhood," said Miss Lindsley. "How is the view from your piazza?"

"Very good," answered Robert De Vere. And when the meal was finished, they all went out on the piazza.

"Delightful!" cried Miss Lindsley, as she viewed the scenery. "All is bright and fair."

"Yonder is the Cashel property," said Victoria presently. "See, yonder is the residence, half hidden among the trees. It is the oldest residence, and the property is the best, in all this country. I sometimes wish that our house were more like Mr. Cashel's. Everything is so new here."

Miss Lindsley had given a start, and grown pale. Robert De Vere, happening to turn toward her, beheld these signs.

"Are you ill, Miss Lindsley?" he exclaimed.

"Not at all," she returned, all the rich, warm color coming back to her face.

Robert took up the thread of Victoria's subject.

"The Cashel estate is a very valuable one," he said. "The present owner inherited it from Mr. Herbert Cashel, who died only some two or three years ago. His father was Herbert Cashel's nephew. Curiously enough, young Cashel is the only living one of the blood. He was never in this country until he came here to claim the estate. His father was an artist, and resided at Florence, Italy, where he died. That's the substance of the story, as I heard it. As it has chanced, I have never beheld the present owner of the estate. He does n't seem to be very sociable."

"Shall we go in?" asked Miss Lindsley, taking Min's hand, after a brief silence.

Her request was obeyed, and they all entered the house.

That night, the last words that Miss Lindsley murmured, after she had retired to rest, and before she closed her eyes in sleep, were, —

"I knew that the Cashel property was in this part of Virginia; but I did not dream that it was so near here. Near Fairmont, was my understanding. However, I suppose Burton Station, being so unimportant, was unknown or forgotten. I wonder what he is like?"

It is as well to state here that Miss Lindsley's Christian name was Barbara.

CHAPTER II.

OUT OF THE SEA.

Out seaward the minute-gun of a ship in distress was booming. A storm had come up suddenly, and clouds as black as the pall of death covered the sky. The wind shrieked and raged with terrific force. The waves beat upon the beach with a sullen roar. Anon a glare of vivid lightning would cut athwart the gloom, and the thunder would crash through the heavens with a sound like the rending of a universe. Truly, it was a wild, wild night!

Farmer Lindsley was sitting before a blazing fire, listening to the roar of the storm without. His wife sat close to the corner of the chimney.

"It is an awful night!" she kept muttering.

Above the howling of the wind, and the roaring of the sea, came the boom of the minute-gun of the doomed ship, heard for the first time by Farmer Lindsley.

"Hark! what was that?" he cried, as he

suddenly sprang to his feet, in a listening attitude.

"I heard nothing but the storm," answered his wife.

"But I did," exclaimed Mr. Lindsley, — "a signal-gun of distress from the sea. Some poor vessel is being hastened on to its doom."

"But vessels never come ashore here," said Mrs. Lindsley.

"Ay, they do," said her husband: "rarely, however. I remember that twenty years ago, before we were married, many a poor dead body was washed ashore from a wrecked ship one night."

Boom! came from over the sea.

"Ah! you heard that?"

"Yes, I heard that," replied Mrs. Lindsley, her lips white.

"That vessel will go to pieces on the rocks," said Mr. Lindsley solemnly.

Mrs. Lindsley wrung her hands.

"Can nothing be done to save the poor wretches on board?" she cried.

"I fear not," answered her husband.

"But get me my great-coat, and I will hasten over to Ogden's, and rouse them, to get them to go with me down to the beach. We may be able to render some aid."

Mr. Lindsley was soon inside his overcoat.

"Build on a rousing fire, wife," he said; "for if any poor wretch should chance to be washed ashore alive, we will have to carry him here. Oh! my lantern. Strange that I should nearly forget that."

The lantern was lighted. The door being opened, a fierce gust of wind swept in; but Farmer Lindsley drew his coat about him, and went out into the storm.

"Hollo!" he shouted, ten minutes later, at Ogden's door.

"Hollo!" was returned from inside the house.

"Did you hear that gun?"

"Yes."

"You are going down to the beach?"

"Yes," was shouted from the inside: "we will be ready in a minute."

The door of the house opened, and a man in an oiled coat stood peering out.

"Is that you, Lindsley?" he asked.

Lindsley gave an affirmative answer to the question.

"The boys are lighting their lanterns," said Ogden. "Hollo! Jack! Tom?"

"Coming, sir," answered voices.

Richard Ogden, and the stalwart young fellows, his sons, came out. They went back, for a short time, toward Farmer Lindsley's house, and then turned down to the beach. Down on the shore they stopped.

The wind was shrieking and howling as madly as ever, and the sea was like a raging monster seeking his prey.

"Ugh! it's a bad night!" cried Richard Ogden; "an awful night for those poor wretches out yonder!"

"I have not heard the gun lately," said Lindsley. "Can she have struck already?"

"I think not," was the reply.

To confirm Ogden's words, once more the minute gun wailed out. The men strove to look out over the boiling sea; but naught save the dense whiteness of the yeasty waves could be seen.

Suddenly, a vivid flash of lightning seemed to divide the heavens in twain; and out over the raging, foaming waters the men saw the doomed vessel, weird as a phantom ship, with the blue light of the troubled heavens gleaming upon her.

"She is very close," cried Ogden; "scarcely a mile away. A few moments will tell the tale."

"And we can do nothing to aid those poor wretches!" exclaimed Lindsley.

"Nothing, I fear," Ogden echoed.

High above the shrieking of the storm and the raging of the sea, came a crash.

Then naught could be heard but the mad roaring of the elements, sounding to the thrilled and appalled men like wild shouts of triumph.

"Heaven pity the poor drowning creatures!" exclaimed Lindsley.

"Heaven pity them!" echoed the Ogdens solemnly.

Then the men did all that it was in their power to do. They separated, and walked up and down the shore, watching and listening.

"What little effort we can make seems vain," said Lindsley to himself.

But it was not to be so. Scarcely had he muttered those words when there was cast up at his feet a human figure. Lindsley stooped quickly, and clasping it in his arms lifted it away from the cruel waves. He placed it on a rock, and then bent over it with his lantern.

A woman's face, white and ghastly in the reflected light, met his gaze. He

reached down his hand and put it over her heart.

It was perfectly still.

He was astonished by hearing a pitiful wail. Certainly, a dead woman could not give forth a sound like that!

Lindsley felt about the woman's figure. He then discovered whence the cry proceeded. Clasped close to the right side of the woman, was a little babe.

"Jack Ogden! Hollo! Jack!" Lindsley called.

In response, Jack came.

"Here is a woman and child," Farmer Lindsley said. "The woman is dead, I believe; but the child yet lives. You and I will carry them up to my house."

The other two Ogdens came up and saw in a moment how matters were.

"Ogden, you and Tom can stay here and watch," Lindsley said. "while Jack and I are gone to the house."

Then the child was released from the close-pressing arms of the woman. Lindsley led the way with his lantern, holding the child close to his breast. Jack Ogden lifted the woman in his arms and followed after. They reached Lindsley's house and entered.

"Lord pity!" cried Mrs. Lindsley; "what have you here?"

For an answer, Jack Ogden laid the dead form that he held before the blazing fire, and Farmer Lindsley placed the babe in his wife's arms.

"It lives," he said. "Wrap it in something warm."

Mrs. Lindsley obeyed. The child's wails gave evidence that its hold on life was strong. Attention was given to the woman. But no effort could give back the breath of life to her still form. The mother was dead, — the child living, — for she was its mother. Evidently, she had been young and very beautiful. Her clothing was of fine texture. Doubtless she had belonged to a wealthy and refined family. It mattered little now. The immortal spark had fled the tenement of clay. The ways of Providence are mysterious, past finding out. The cruel ocean had stolen away the mother's life, and left her helpless babe alive.

When the morning dawned, the storm had stilled to quietness. The sun rose in golden splendor. The ocean was as calm as though it had never hungered to swallow up the human freight of ships.

The Ogdens and Lindsleys had watched all night. Several dead bodies had been washed ashore; and, besides the babe, one other that contained life. That other was a youth, a sailor. Judging from appearances, he was about twenty years of age.

Of all on board of the ill-fated vessel, but two had been spared.

The young sailor remained with the Ogdens for a few days. His name was George Gorman.

Farmer Lindsley interrogated him about the woman and the babe.

"I suppose they are mother and child?" he said.

"Yes, they are," answered Gorman pityingly. "Poor young woman! Her husband put her on board our ship at Liverpool. I think her destination was Baltimore. That is about all I can tell you."

"Her husband's name was?" —

"Cashel. Mrs. Cashel was very much liked by all of us poor devils of sailors. I will never forget her, poor thing! She was a lady, and kind and gentle as an angel."

That was all the sailor knew. That the woman's name was Cashel, was sure, for she had proofs enough about her clothing to establish her identity. It was likewise with the infant's clothing.

And what could Farmer Lindsley do about the child? He could think of but one thing. That was to keep it. He could not search over two continents for its relatives.

So it came about that the Lindsleys adopted as their own the little waif that had been sent to them by the ocean.

CHAPTER III.

TEN YEARS LATER.

It was a day in summer. Richard Ogden was walking slowly over toward the Lindsley farm-house. He was accompanied by his wife. Their faces were sad, for Farmer Lindsley was lying in his house, pale and still. The hand of death had fallen upon him.

It was ten years after the wrecking of the ship upon the coast.

Richard Ogden and his wife reached their destination. Entering the house of death they found there quite a collection of the rude people of the coast, among them their own sons.

A hymn was sung, a prayer uttered, and

then James Lindsley was carried out into the orchard, and laid to rest by another grave.

The other grave was that of his wife, who had died nearly a year previous to this time.

The clods were heaped on James Lindsley's coffin, and then the little procession returned to the house. Many tears had been shed, for the kind-hearted farmer was beloved by every one that knew him. But the bitterest mourner was a little girl rather more than ten years of age. She wept pitiously over the coffin, and clinging to Richard Ogden and his wife after all was over, continued to sob pitifully.

"Oh, what am I to do!" she cried, after they had reached the house. "Poor papa has left me alone!"

"Barbara, you are not left alone," whispered Mrs. Ogden soothingly, bending over the girl. "Dear child, you are to go home with me, and I will take care of you."

Barbara was comforted in some degree, for she loved Mrs. Ogden dearly. However, she could not entirely restrain her grief for the death of her "dear papa."

The assemblage dispersed, and Richard Ogden carried the still sobbing child to his house.

But the grief of childhood does not endure forever, and in the course of a few days Barbara was running about the residence of the Ogdens, bright and smiling, an occasional shadow falling on her face, however, when she remembered the death of her "dear papa" Lindsley.

She was a pretty child, with a slender and graceful form, and dark hair and eyes, — a sweet little girl, who gave promise of a glorious womanhood. Need it be stated that she was the little babe grown taller, who had been saved from the wreck on that stormy night of a little more than ten years previous? She was the same, and from that hour till the day of his death James Lindsley had been a father to her.

One evening, a week after the funeral, Richard Ogden was seated in front of his house. The glories of the dying day were shining over land and sea. He could behold the ocean spread out calm and peaceful. Sea-birds winged their flight over the quiet waters. Banks of golden-hued clouds were piled up in the horizon, and the sails of a distant vessel were faintly outlined to view.

Barbara Lindsley came up the path that led toward the sea. She was about to enter the house when Richard Ogden called her.

"Barbara," he said.

The little girl walked to his side and stood waiting for him to proceed.

"Barbara, the will of your papa Lindsley has been read," Richard Ogden continued kindly, "and he gives his property to you, appointing me his executor."

Barbara was wise beyond her years, so she comprehended, — at least, all but the last word; and she guessed pretty well what that meant, from the others. Her face flushed and her eyes filled with tears.

"As I am not his own little girl, he was very kind," she murmured.

Richard Ogden stroked her hair.

"What would my little girl wish done with her property?" he asked gravely.

"Is there very much?" asked Barbara hesitatingly.

"Not a very great deal," Mr. Ogden replied. "I suppose that five or six thousand dollars may be realized from it. Does that seem like a great amount to you?"

"Yes, sir," Barbara murmured. "Mr. Ogden" —

The child stopped.

"Well, my dear?"

"If I could go to some school where I could learn a great deal, I would like it very much. Can I?"

Richard Ogden was a plain, practical, far-seeing man. He was not highly educated, but his common sense had caused him to see that Barbara was no common child, and the very thought that this would be her choice had prompted him to consult her. If he had held council with his neighbors, most, or perhaps all, would have advised him to save the child's money, and let her take her chance for obtaining knowledge with the rest of the children along the coast; a slim enough one was that, indeed!

But Mr. Ogden saw matters in a different light.

"I think you can go, my child," he said, in answer to the question Barbara had asked.

He entered the house, leaving her outside. He found his wife, and told her the child's choice.

"Certainly, she shall be sent to school," cried Mrs. Ogden. "Richard, rude people that we are, what little we know lifts us higher. But Barbara is purer and finer

than common people. I believe that her parents were wealthy and aristocratic, and some day her relatives may find her out. Give her an education so as to enable her to fill any station in life that may be hers. My idea is romantic, I know, but neither absurd nor unlikely."

"No, not unlikely," said Richard Ogden gravely. "But, wife, if the girl is given a chance, she will make her way in the world, herself, I am satisfied."

"Ay," exclaimed Mrs. Ogden. "It would be like shutting the birds away from the sunshine to keep her in ignorance, with no better chance than she will have here."

Richard Ogden returned to Barbara.

"My dear," he said, "you are to have as good an education as any school in the land will afford."

So Barbara was sent away to a famous school in a distant city.

Honest, practical Richard Ogden managed to make the income from Barbara's money sufficient to support her, so that the principal was not troubled.

And the years sped.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CEDARS.

In the library, by a quaintly carved table, sat the master of The Cedars. He was busily engaged in writing.

In a certain sense the man was handsome; but, to the student of human nature, the face was not an attractive one. Cruel lines were there, and at times something about the thin red lips and white teeth suggested the cruelty of the tiger.

The master of The Cedars was proud and haughty. He had the manners of a gentleman, and was always elegantly dressed. Doubtless he had seen much of the world. Most people would feel themselves honored by his acquaintance.

His white hand was moving rapidly over the smooth surface of the paper, when a negro servant appeared at the library door, bowing and showing his teeth in a grin.

"What is wanted?" asked the master of The Cedars, pausing from his writing.

The servant reached out a card.

"Gentleman's at de door, Massa Cashel, and him wants to see you."

The master of The Cedars laid down his pen.

"Show the man in," he said.

The servant turned away. In a short time he returned, ushering in a gentleman in neat apparel, with shining gold spectacles on his forehead.

"Are you Mr. Lionel Cashel?" he asked of the master of The Cedars.

"I am," was the reply. "Be seated, sir."

"Thank you. My name is Wylie, as you doubtless perceived by my card, of the firm Wylie & Oldham, attorneys at law, Baltimore."

The lawyer's manner was straightforward and business-like. The master of The Cedars looked him in the face, paling just a little.

"I presume you have business with me, Mr. Wylie," he said. "If so, proceed."

The lawyer hesitated a little. Probably he was slightly embarrassed, man of the world though he was. His mission was rather an unusual and peculiar one,—that of coolly demanding the splendid estate known as The Cedars, together with all other hereditaments, real, as well as personal property, that had belonged to the deceased Herbert Cashel.

"Ahem!" coughed the lawyer. "My business is somewhat unpleasant, Mr. Cashel. But my duty is plain and unavoidable. You inherited The Cedars, sir, as you believe, from Herbert Cashel, lately deceased."

"I did."

"You are his grand-nephew?"

"I am," returned the master of The Cedars coldly.

The color had returned to his face.

"Permit me to ask"—

"Are you aware," interrupted the lawyer, "that Herbert Cashel had a daughter? and that that daughter is still living?"

"Sir!" exclaimed the master of The Cedars, springing to his feet.

"The Mr. Cashel, lately deceased, had a daughter," said Mr. Wylie, quietly, "and that daughter is still alive."

The lawyer was speaking very courteously. But the effect of his words on the master of The Cedars was marked. His face flamed crimson. He lifted his hand and ran it nervously through his dark hair. The tiger-like gleam of his teeth became apparent.

"I believe that is false," he cried in blind rage; "false as Satan's heart! Hear

me, sir! No rascally attempt to blackmail me will succeed!"

The lawyer sat perfectly quiet.

"Pray, be calm, Mr. Cashel," he said.

"I assure you this is no attempt to blackmail you."

With an effort the master of The Cedars restrained his anger.

"I believe it is," he muttered, sinking back in his seat.

There was a change in him; instead of being crimson, his face grew very pale.

"Go on, for I presume you have not finished," he said with a sneer. What does the heiress of Herbert Cashel demand?"

"The heiress of Herbert Cashel," said Mr. Wylie, *still as calm and courteous as ever*, "simply desires to know whether or not you will surrender the estate that you hold, if she produces indisputable proofs of her rights. Will you?"

"Proofs! what are your proofs?" said the master of The Cedars.

But the attorney was too cunning to so soon show to his opponent the hand he held. A scarcely observable smile flitted across his face. He had been studying the features of the man before him, and had arrived at the conclusion that he was unprincipled. He felt beforehand that the request of the heiress of Herbert Cashel would not be answered favorably.

"You answer my question, Mr. Cashel, by asking another," he said, with the first show of impatience or anger he had made.

"The question was simple and easily answered by an honest man. Will the distant relative pledge himself to surrender to the daughter her property, upon the production of conclusive proofs that she is what she claims to be?"

The anger of the master of The Cedars flamed out again.

"A thousand devils!" he cried. "I will pledge myself to nothing! Is that sufficient? If it is, I wish you a very good-day."

"Before I go," said Mr. Wylie, "I wish to state that a court of law will speedily determine this matter. I can say that I believe Miss Cashel would have been generous to the relative who would surrender to her her just rights. But to the man who proposes to keep her out of them, I promise nothing. And I say this, feeling that he has already been too defiant to hope for aught."

"Go to your courts of law!" cried the master of The Cedars mockingly. "You will find that I have possession, and I will battle with you to the last! If I do not prove that your client is an impostor, then condemn me for a fool."

With a slight bow, Mr. Wylie turned from the library. The master of The Cedars, when he was left alone, bowed his face upon his hand, and held it there long. He lifted it presently, his eyes blazing with evil passions.

"Curse me if I do not give them trouble ere they dispossess me here!" he muttered. "They will find that they are fighting neither a child nor an idiot. They will have something of which to boast when they conquer me."

He reached out his hand, and pulled the bell-cord. The same negro servant that had ushered in Mr. Wylie appeared.

"Bring me a bottle of wine," said the master of The Cedars.

When the wine was brought, he dismissed the servant, and, pouring out a glass of wine, swallowed it at a draught.

"That story disturbs me, after all," he continued to soliloquize. He was calmer than he had been. "It would be terrible to have to surrender my life of ease, and be cast upon my oars again."

Draught after draught of wine he drank. Presently the man seized his pen, and rapidly dashed off a few lines.

"I will have Evans down, and consult him, at any rate," he muttered.

He inclosed in an envelope what he had written, and addressed it to

ARTHUR EVANS, ESQ.,

ATTORNEY AT LAW,

FAIRMOUNT, VA.

Then he rang the bell once more. When his servant had responded to his ring, he said, —

"Sant, have Prince saddled, and return immediately to me."

"Prince am saddled, sah," said Sant, returning after an absence of five minutes' duration.

"Take this letter," said the master of The Cedars, "and ride to the lawyer, Evans. You know him?"

"Yes, sah."

"Now be off; and hasten."

A few hours later, Mr. Arthur Evans, attorney at law, was in the presence of the impatient master of The Cedars. It is not necessary to further describe him than to say that he was smooth and cunning, — by no means a fool, — and his rascality had been of that kind upon which the law could not secure a hold sufficient to give him any trouble.

"I received your summons," he said to the master of The Cedars, "and came immediately."

There was a silence. Mr. Arthur Evans was content to await the pleasure of his rich client.

"Evans," burst out that gentleman presently, "a Baltimore lawyer has waited on me, and coolly informed me that The Cedars does not belong to me."

"The devil!" cried Mr. Arthur Evans, in astonishment. "Then to whom does he say the estate belongs?"

"That astute legal gentleman claimed that it belongs to a daughter of my uncle, the late Herbert Cashel."

"Singular that nothing has ever been known of that daughter till this time," exclaimed Evans mockingly. "Where has she been hiding, that nothing has been known of her existence?"

"I know nothing of her," was the reply. "The impudent scamp of a lawper made me angry, and I terminated the interview as soon as possible. The whole affair is no doubt a base plot; still it may give me trouble."

The eyes of Mr. Arthur Evans, attorney at law, shone with a little added light. Of course he wished the great master of The Cedars, his best client, no harm; but the prospect of a great lawsuit was cheering. Perhaps he might render some peculiarly important service, that, not quite exposing him to the vengeance of the law, might bring him great reward. The Cedars in litigation, and he in the confidence of the defendant in the case! Surely the prospect was cheering!

"What was the lawyer's name?" asked Evans.

"Wylie."

"Of the firm of Wylie & Oldham?"

"Yes."

Mr. Arthur Evans had started slightly at mention of the name. Now his countenance fell.

"I know something of Wylie," he said, "and" —

He paused.

"Go on, Evans," cried the master of The Cedars impatiently.

"I do not believe Wylie would take the case unless he thought there was something in it," said Evans slowly.

The matter was easily balanced in the mind of Mr. Arthur Evans. The prospect of litigation about The Cedars, and, by the aid of a little sharp practice, winning the case in the end, was pleasant. But the having opposed to him a talented and an honest lawyer, who would sift all rascality to the bottom, and who would not have taken the case had it been a bad one, was another matter. And, as Evans had hinted, the very fact that Mr. Wylie, of the firm of Wylie & Oldham, had taken the matter in hand augured unfavorably.

The master of The Cedars turned toward Evans.

"Do you wish to conspire against me too?" he cried angrily.

Mr. Arthur Evans raised his hand with a deprecatory gesture.

"By no means," he exclaimed.

After a moment's pause, the attorney continued, —

"Did Wylie give you any hint as to the proof that could be produced of the claimant's identity?"

"No. He stated merely that it is indisputable."

Evans rose, and began to pace the floor. Presently he paused before his client.

"The estate that the late Herbert Cashel left," he uttered deliberately, "is, as you very well know, immense. Divided, it would make two very large fortunes. Mr. Cashel, I advise you to examine the proofs; and if the new claimant has any claim, as I fear she has, buy her off."

"By the imps of Satan!" cried the master of The Cedars fiercely, "I will consent to no compromise."

"Doubtless you could still retain The Cedars," said Evans smoothly. "Of course she can have no affection for the place as her home, and stocks and bonds will doubtless satisfy her. What do you say?"

Evans had his way. Though the master of The Cedars raged and stormed for a while, the end of it all was, that Mr. Arthur Evans was to be sent to Baltimore to consult Mr. Wylie as to what arrange-

ments the new claimant would make, and forever surrender her rights, if she possessed any, in the estate of the late Herbert Cashel, deceased.

CHAPTER V.

THE LAWYER'S MISSION.

Mr. Arthur Evans ascended the steps of an attorney's office in Baltimore. A gilt-lettered sign bore the names of "Wylie & Oldham." Evans rang the door-bell. An office-boy answered his summons.

"Is Mr. Wylie in?" was his question, handing his card.

"Walk in, and I will see," said the boy politely.

Evans entered, and the boy gave him a seat. Several clerks were writing busily. The boy disappeared, but returned in a few moments.

"Mr. Wylie will see you in his private office, sir," he said to Evans, who followed him as he led the way into the lawyer's presence.

Mr. Wylie glanced up from some writing with which he was engaged, and then laid down his pen.

"Pray be seated," he said, glancing once more at the card he still held in his hand.

He had been wondering whether or not Mr. Arthur Evans, attorney at law, had been sent by the master of The Cedars.

His curiosity was soon satisfied; for Evans at once plunged into the subject that had brought him hither.

"I have come as the representative of Mr. Lionel Cashel of The Cedars," he began.

Mr. Wylie's brow contracted for a moment, but only for a moment. Then his face was clear again.

"Proceed," he said.

"He informs me," Evans continued, "that you are the attorney of a claimant for the estate of the late Herbert Cashel."

"I am," Mr. Wylie replied.

Evans hesitated. He was at a sticking-point. But he found words presently, and proceeded.

"Inasmuch as litigation, which I suppose may be long continued, will certainly involve the estate, Mr. Lionel Cashel authorizes me to enter into some reasonable compromise. Of course it is expected by him that I will not go too far."

Mr. Wylie's eyes sparkled.

"What does Mr. Cashel propose?" asked he, with a smile that Evans fancied did not augur well for the success of his mission.

"As his attorney, I will say that the young lady shall be assured of a comfortable competence," Evans returned, "provided she will relinquish all claim to the estate. This upon condition that the proofs be submitted to a disinterested attorney, qualified to decide upon the matter. If he decide that the claimant has even a shadow of a chance, my client will perform what I indicate."

Mr. Wylie's face flushed.

"It amuses me," he said, "to know, that, after all his bravado, Mr. Cashel is getting frightened."

Then he added cuttingly, —

"The proofs have been submitted to me, Mr. Evans; and my decision is, that your client has not even the ghost of a prospect of holding the Cashel estates when the matter shall be tested by justice. I assure you that it is mere folly to think that she to whom the estate actually belongs can be bought off with a mere tithe of her rights. I should suppose, that, if your client were an honest man, he would desire to return to the daughter of Herbert Cashel the property he holds by virtue of a collateral relationship. Why should he desire to take advantage of her misfortunes and of her having been hitherto unknown? Why should he wish to intrench himself behind the mere fact of possession, and battle against the rightful owner of the Cashel estate?"

"But" —

"Miss Cashel has placed this whole matter in my hands," Mr. Wylie interrupted; "and I beg to assure you, Mr. Evans, that, if your client had displayed the disposition and intentions of a gentleman, he doubtless would have been allowed a comfortable competence for the property. But he threw down the gauntlet; he defied us; he cried, 'No quarter.' Now he shall abide by his first choice, and he can expect nothing whatever from us. He challenged us to go to a court of law, and there we propose to have the matter tested. I speak as I do, knowing that it must be decided there. I never beheld Mr. Lionel Cashel but once. However, I am not so blind that I cannot read, especially when the page is opened for me."

"Then you take the grounds of no compromise?"

"No compromise whatever," returned Mr. Wylie. "Mr. Lionel Cashel can surrender the estate now, or when he is compelled. As I have indicated, I am well aware that he will not surrender it till he is compelled."

"No, not till he is compelled. And let me tell you, sir, that you are boasting too soon. It will be no easy matter to convince a court of justice that the daughter of Herbert Cashel has been kept concealed for twenty years. It is rather late in the day for a person to come forward and claim a great estate on such grounds. And her claims may be treated as preposterous by sensible men. Good-day, sir."

And, with these words uttered, Mr. Arthur Evans left the law-office of Wylie & Oldham.

"It isn't my habit to talk so much," said Mr. Wylie to himself after Evans was gone; "but, believing both of those men to be scamps, I was a little carried away by my feelings."

His face grew thoughtful.

"My only fear is, that they may beat us by some rascality," he continued in his thoughts. "Still, I will not compromise with rascals for fear of their rascality. And I know, as well as that oily Evans did, that they would consent to nothing within the bounds of reason. It would be a mere waste of breath to talk with them upon the subject of a compromise."

Mr. Arthur Evans was forced to announce to the master of The Cedars that his mission had been a failure.

"By the heart of Pluto!" that person swore, "old Wylie and his client will not gain anything by their stubbornness. I will give them so bitter a fight, that they will wish, before they are through, that they had never entered into law against me. Demanding the Cashel estate and obtaining it will be two entirely different matters, as they will discover to their sorrow."

A week later, the master of The Cedars received the first legal notice in the case of Cashel versus Cashel.

And it was shortly afterward that Barbara Lindsley had come to visit the De Veres.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ACCIDENT.

The master of The Cedars was driving rapidly along the hard, level road that ran through his estate and down past the residence of the De Veres. The animal that he was driving was a large black horse, superbly formed, and with glistening skin. Evidently he was wild and fiery. The servants at The Cedars shook their heads every time the master took his seat behind him.

"Better take some other beast," they would mutter. "Dat brack villain 'll be de death ob him yet."

But the mutterings and head-shakings were all unheeded.

The horse and driver were passing De Vere's residence. Generally, the man kept his eye upon the beast; but as it chanced, just at this time his head was bowed in thought. Suddenly a dog sprang out by the roadside, with a growl.

The horse leaped away with a bound, and the lines were jerked from his driver's hands. The animal took the bit in his teeth and dashed onward madly. But he had run scarcely fifty yards when the vehicle struck a tree, standing by the side of the road. There was a crash, a moment of struggling and pain, then darkness shadowed the vision of the master of The Cedars.

Robert De Vere had seen the accident. He came running down the avenue, and sprang through the gates. He reached the shattered carriage, and bent over the man lying prostrate there.

The horse had continued on his course, taking a portion of the vehicle with him.

The period of unconsciousness of the master of The Cedars was of brief duration. He opened his eyes, and tried to raise himself to his feet. But he sank back with a groan.

"Satan take that beast!" he cried savagely.

"Be quiet," said Robert De Vere to him, "and I will have assistance shortly."

Robert ran back to the avenue gate. Victoria had just come out of the house; and stood upon the piazza.

"Send some of the servants to me," he shouted; "an injured man is lying in the road."

Victoria re-entered the house. Robert hastened back.

"Do you feel as though you are very severely hurt?" he asked of the master of The Cedars, as he lifted his head into an easier position than that which it had occupied.

"I do not know," was the answer with a groan. "My right leg feels as though it were broken. Curse that devil of a horse!"

Several negro men appeared upon the scene. The master of The Cedars was lifted in their arms and carefully carried to the house. When they reached it, he was laid upon a couch, and one of the men was hastily mounted and despatched for a physician.

"Go for Dr. Gower," Robert De Vere said. "Be speedy!"

The servant had a ride of three miles and back to perform. Consequently, it was fully an hour before Dr. Gower came.

Meantime, Robert De Vere examined the injuries of the master of The Cedars. He was severely bruised, but his wounds were not dangerous. His right ankle was sprained, instead of the limb being broken.

When Dr. Gower did appear he found there was but very little he could do, additional to what Robert had already done.

"You have done nobly," he said to Robert. "I must compliment you as being a very good surgeon."

Dr. Gower decided that the injured man could not be taken to his home for a few days.

A couple of days after the accident the man was able to lean on Robert De Vere, and, by that means, walk into the parlor. Thus far the servants, assisted by Robert, had attended to his wants. Robert had been with him most of the time.

As it chanced, Victoria De Vere was in the parlor. As Victoria had not before beheld the master of The Cedars there was an introduction.

"I am very sorry that you were so unfortunate, Mr. Cashel," Victoria murmured.

He gave the sweet face of the young girl an admiring glance.

"Thank you," he returned. "I have been warned that that animal of mine will kill me, but I never paid much attention to the warnings."

"But you will heed this last one," smiled Victoria.

"Yes. However, I will not promise to heed it so much as to cease driving that horse; in that case, it would seem as though he had conquered me. But I will watch him closely in the future, depend upon it!"

Then he detailed to Victoria the manner in which the accident had occurred. There was nothing tiger-like in his expression now. He was laughing, and seemed frank and pleasant. He congratulated himself that there was one favorable thing about his accident,—it had made him acquainted with these pleasant people.

The subject of conversation was changed, and the minutes fled rapidly. Presently the master of The Cedars asked for some music. Victoria complied with his request, playing several pieces.

He applauded her.

"My playing will not compare with that of Miss Lindsley, a guest of ours," Victoria said. "You should hear her play!"

"Where is Miss Lindsley this afternoon?" Robert asked. "I have scarcely seen her during the day."

"I dare say she is in her room," Victoria replied. "She may be ill. If Mr. Cashel will excuse me, I will go and search for her, and will persuade her to come and entertain him with some of her delightful music."

And with a bow Victoria left the apartment. As she had anticipated, she found Barbara in her room. She was sitting with her face bowed in her hands, in deep thought. Victoria entered without knocking.

"Are you ill, Barbara?" she asked, as Miss Lindsley raised her head.

"Not at all," was the reply. "I was only thinking."

"I have taken it upon myself," Victoria exclaimed, "to promise Mr. Cashel, who is in the parlor, some music at your hands. Will you enable me to keep my promise?"

A little deeper tinge of color than usual dyed Barbara's cheeks. Then she said,—

"To be sure, Victoria's promise shall be kept."

As she followed Victoria her thought was, "I'd as well meet him now as any time. At any rate, he will have no idea who I am!"

Soon the two girls were in the parlor.

"Miss Lindsley, Mr. Cashel," said Victoria simply.

The man bowed, and felt a thrill of

pleasure. He had admired Victoria! But what a beautiful, magnificent, incomparable creature this was!

"It would be worth a life-time of labor to win her!" he thought.

Barbara took her place at the piano. She had paled a little, but was not embarrassed. She was master of the instrument, and never in her life had she played better than she did on this afternoon. The master of The Cedars, bad man though he was, felt the power of her music.

Barbara ceased. The eyes of the master of The Cedars met hers. His heart beat a more rapid motion. Instinctively she turned her face away with a chilled sensation. In those first moments of acquaintance her soul warned her truly, and the thought came to her that whatever fate might work out for this man and her, she could never like him!

Conversation was resumed. Shortly, dinner was announced. The day passed. A few more like it sped. Then the master of The Cedars was able to go to his home.

"Do not drive that wild horse of yours any more," were almost the last words Victoria said to him.

"I think I shall," he returned.

"I will have to prophecy," Victoria cried, half gayly, half seriously.

"Prophecy, Miss De Vere!"

"I warn you that if you do not cease driving that wild animal he will kill you. You have heard that before, but I warn you to heed it!"

But Victoria's prophecy never came true.

CHAPTER VII.

VICTOR.

Robert De Vere had been to Fairmount. Returning, he dismounted, and giving his horse into the charge of a servant, entered the house. He met Victoria in the hall.

"You are in good time," she cried; "dinner is just ready. I was going out on the piazza to take a last look for you."

Miss Lindsley was waiting in the parlor with little Min, and they all went out together.

"I heard a piece of news at Fairmount that surprised me a little," Robert said, after they were seated.

"Well, what was it?" asked Victoria.

"There is a new claimant for the Cashel estate," Robert replied, "and a great lawsuit in prospective."

"A new claimant!" exclaimed Victoria. "Who can it be?"

"I know very little about it, except 'tis a woman."

"A woman!"

"Yes; and a Cashel. I suppose she must claim to be the daughter of the deceased Herbert Cashel. I presume the case will come up before the Circuit Court at Fairmount in August next; but I dare say it will not stop there."

"Why not?" inquired Barbara Lindsley.

"Because it is not probable that the losing party will be satisfied with the decision of that tribunal," Robert said, "but will wish to carry it to a higher court."

"Oh, I perceive," Barbara returned.

Then she added with a smile, "I know but little about law."

The conversation on the subject continued for some time, Victoria and Robert doing most of the talking, however, Barbara saying but little.

After dinner Barbara went to her room. Directly, however, she came down-stairs, equipped for a walk. As was her custom, frequently, she was going to take a solitary ramble. She started in the direction of The Cedars; but she did not keep in the road, taking instead a path that led through a grassy field.

She was thinking about the Cashel estate. She wondered what the De Veres would say could they know she was the new claimant of The Cedars. Should she tell them?

She concluded, finally, that as she had kept the matter a secret from them thus far, she would continue to do so, — at least until the case was decided. If the suit should go against her, she need never be known to the world by any other name than Barbara Lindsley.

If it should go against her? Mr. Wylie had told her that unless there was some deep rascality, that could not be exposed, practised against her, it could not terminate so!

And if she won, she would be Barbara Cashel, mistress of a vast estate!

Barbara walked on, passing through a gate now and then, scarcely realizing how far she was going. Ere she was aware of it, she was near to The Cedars. A great gray stone mansion rose up before her.

Barbara's sensations were somewhat strange ones. Able lawyers had told her that this grand old place was justly hers. Her ancestors had lived and died here. But for fate, the apartments of this great building had been as familiar to her as the little house by the sea, that for many years she had called her home. As it was, a stranger held her inheritance. She, the daughter of Herbert Cashel, had been cut off from it.

Is it strange that Barbara's heart swelled and the tears came to her eyes at that last thought? The cold cruel sea had stolen her forever from the clasp of her father's arms had kept for these twenty years from ever looking upon the place that should have been her home from her babyhood up!

It was a great house, that was before her, with long wings extending from the main building. The builder must have had in his brain the baronial castles of the Old World, and have tried to pattern after them. Barbara half fancied that all it needed was moat and wall, and then she might expect to see issuing from it knights with shields and spears.

Then, with a musical laugh, the girl brought herself back to the reality.

"How I dream!" she murmured.

The grounds about The Cedars were beautiful. Barbara did not feel in the least tired, and thought that she would ramble over the place a little. She turned and walked along a grass-green path, and came soon to a high stone wall. A gate already open was before her, and she passed through.

She was in an enchanted place. Great trees towered toward the sky. The earth was carpeted in green. A little distance away a silvery little stream wound along.

Unobserved by Barbara, a huge dog came along the wall. He was fierce and vicious looking. Seemingly prompted by curiosity, for he gave forth no evidence of anger, he followed along after the girl, scenting the earth. His tread was as noiseless as a tiger's.

Barbara reached the banks of the stream. She paused enraptured by the scene that surrounded her. The animal on her track paused too, and snuffed the air.

Barbara beheld a light boat, floating in the stream, and fastened to a post on the shore with a lock and long chain. She stepped in the boat, and with an oar she found lying in it pushed it away from shore. The chain was just stretched, and the boat could go no

further, when her eyes chanced to wander to the top of the bank.

Barbara's blood chilled with fear, for standing there watching her was a great monster with red tongue and white, cruel fangs. He looked at her for a moment, and laid down with his eye fixed upon her.

Barbara's heart did not beat quite so rapidly. After all, the dog would probably not harm her. She took hold of the chain, and pulled the boat to the shore. But just as she was on the point of stepping out, the creature on the shore sprang to his feet with a fierce growl, his bristles erect, his tongue out, his white fangs gleaming. With a cry of terror Barbara sprang toward the back part of the boat, and fell prostrate in it. The dog leaped toward her. But by some means he missed the object for which he sprang. His huge body came in contact with the boat, forcing it out in the stream, while he tumbled into the water. Barbara regained her feet, and the beast swam to the shore. There he stood baying in baffled rage, while the girl, seizing the oar, held the boat out from the bank, her face white with terror.

"Help! help!" she screamed.

The brute came closer. He seemed to be preparing for another leap. If he should leap, not reaching the boat, he would, in all probability, overturn it.

"Help! help!" Barbara screamed.

Suddenly a man appeared behind the dog, in answer to Barbara's cries. He grasped in his hands a huge club. With one glance he took in the danger, and then approached closer with swift but stealthy tread. He struck a terrific blow, and Barbara's peril was ended, for by that blow the dog was knocked into the stream, giving as he went a wild howl of pain. The man drew the boat to the shore, and springing in it lifted Barbara out. She was very pale, and he placed her on the grassy bank.

"Oh, it was terrible!" she cried.

Shortly she rose to her feet.

"I will escort you to your home," the stranger said; "that is, if you permit me."

Barbara murmured her thanks. The man offered his arm, which she took gratefully, for she felt that she needed aid.

"I am sorry to trouble you so much," she said, as they started off. "It is a mile and a half to where I am staying."

"Do I look as though a walk of a mile and a half would fatigue me greatly?" said the man, with a pleasant smile.

Certainly he did not look so, for he was tall and powerfully built; a man with splendid athletic figure, noble in its proportions.

"I think, after I leave these grounds," Barbara said, "I can get along alone."

"I shall not leave you till you are safe at your destination," was the reply. "You are pale and weak."

The man's voice thrilled Barbara, it was so rich and musical. Involuntarily she raised her eyes, and beheld his eyes beaming down upon her. They were beautiful eyes, magnetic in their power, telling of a brave and generous heart. Even in this moment Barbara thought that this stranger would be strikingly handsome if it were not for one thing; and that was, that he wore a huge red beard, which entirely concealed the lower part of his face.

Barbara grew silent for a time. She shuddered as she thought of the danger from which she had escaped. Was this adventure ominous? Did any monster stand between her and her inheritance?

"I have not told you my name," she suddenly said to the stranger. "Excuse me. It is Barbara Lindsley."

"Thank you," he returned.

He seemed to hesitate for a moment.

"Mine is Victor," he said presently.

"A very suitable name," Barbara murmured, with a smile.

Mr. Victor's face flushed; but he ignored the remark.

Barbara was beginning to feel much better.

"That estate over which I was rambling belongs to a man by the name of Cashel, I believe," Victor said.

"Yes," was the rather constrained answer: "Mr. Lionel Cashel is the name of the gentleman who possesses the property."

"How long has he been in possession? I understand that he inherited it from a somewhat distant relative."

"I believe that Mr. Cashel has held the estate for some two or three years," Barbara said.

"I heard in Fairmount, from which place I rode down this afternoon, that there is another claimant," said Mr. Victor in a careless tone; "and I was told that there is to be a great lawsuit. Have you heard anything about it?"

"Yes," said Barbara. "Yonder is my destination, just in view."

Mr. Victor lifted his eyes in the direction of the De Vere residence. No more was said about the Cashel estate.

Ten minutes later, the two stood by an iron gate close behind the house.

"Will you enter?" Barbara said to Mr. Victor.

"Thank you, no," he replied. "I left a horse standing a few hundred yards away from the scene of your adventure; and I must hasten back, Miss Lindsley."

"At any rate, Mr. Victor," said Barbara, "you must call soon, so that I can suitably express my thanks for the great service you rendered me."

"No thanks are necessary," said the man. "I could not have done less. I was wandering through those grounds, and, when I heard your cries, was near to you. I simply hastened to you, and knocked that ugly brute into the stream. That was all."

"Yet you saved my life," said Barbara, smiling up into his face.

Mr. Victor yet lingered.

"Miss Lindsley," he said abruptly, pulling a glove from his pocket, — her glove, — "you dropped this by the bank of that stream, and I picked it up."

He paused. His eyes were shining down upon the girl.

She waited for him to continue.

"Will it be too much of a favor to bestow this upon me?" he said presently.

"Certainly not," murmured Barbara. "If you wish it, you may keep the glove, Mr. Victor."

Victor turned, and was gone, the glove still in his hand.

Barbara ran to the house, and up to her room, the stranger's rich, musical voice ringing in her ears, his eyes flashing before her vision.

"Her face is forever fixed upon my heart," Mr. Victor said to himself as he hastened on. "If we never meet again, I shall not forget her. And her glove shall be to me what his lady's guerdon was to knight of old."

Victor soon reached the place where his horse was fastened.

After he was mounted, he did one thing that seemed strange. He lifted his hand, and shook it in the direction of the great gray stone mansion.

"Beware of retribution, false villain!" he muttered.